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ACCOMMODATION

South Africa offers a wide selection of good-value accommodation. Whatever your budget, you'll generally find high standards, often for significantly less than you would pay for the equivalent in Europe, Australasia or North America.

At the budget level, the main options are camping grounds, backpackers hostels and self-catering cottages. With just a few exceptions, you can expect clean surroundings and good facilities. The main caveat with places in this price category is that

there aren't enough of them; away from tourist areas sometimes the only budget option is camping.

Midrange accommodation is particularly good value, especially for B&Bs. Expect a private or semi-private bathroom and a clean, comfortable room. Self-catering accommodation at national parks – usually priced in the budget to midrange category – also tends to be very good value.

At the top end, South Africa boasts some of the best wildlife lodges in the region, as well as classic guesthouses and several superb hotels. Places at this level offer all the amenities you would expect for prices that are similar to, or slightly less than, those you would pay in Europe or North America. There are also some not-so-superb hotels which can be expensive disappointments, so be selective.

Accommodation in Swaziland is priced similarly to that in South Africa. At the

PRACTICALITIES

- All three countries use the metric system for weights and measures (see the conversion chart inside the front cover).
- Access electricity (220-250V AC, 50Hz) with a three-pin adaptor (round pins, though South Africa has its own unique version); they're easy enough to find – check in camping supply stores.
- Best weekly: *Mail & Guardian*. Best daily: the *Sowetan*. Others to look for: the *Sunday Independent*; the *Sunday Times*; the *Johannesburg Star*; and *Business Day*. Check out *Getaway* magazine for travel news.
- Tune the TV to SABC for the news (SABC3 is mostly English). e-TV has a more independent viewpoint. M-Net has movies and sports.
- SABC radio comes in 11 languages. BBC's World Service is available on short wave, medium wave and (in and near Lesotho) FM.

BOOK ACCOMMODATION ONLINE

For more accommodation reviews and recommendations by Lonely Planet authors, check out the online booking service at www.lonelyplanet.com. You'll find the true, insider lowdown on the best places to stay. Reviews are thorough and independent. Best of all, you can book online.

budget level, there are a handful of backpacker hostels, and free-camping is possible in most areas of the country. Lesotho is not known for its high-class hotel accommodation. However, there are several notable exceptions, and camping opportunities abound away from major towns.

Accommodation listings in this book are ordered from budget to midrange to top end. Expect to pay somewhat more in major tourist areas such as Cape Town (which is one of the most expensive places in the region), and somewhat less in Lesotho.

There are significant seasonal price variations, with rates rising steeply during the December-January school break, and again around Easter, when room prices often double, and minimum stays are imposed. Advance bookings are essential during these times. The other school holidays are also often classified as high season, although it's more common to have 'midseason' pricing. Conversely, you can get some excellent deals during the winter low season, which is also the best time for wildlife-watching. Many places offer discounted midweek rates, so always ask. To save money during peak holiday periods, the best bets are camping, backpacker hostels or self-catering places.

Online Booking

Many regions have B&B organisations and tourist offices that take bookings (see listings in the regional chapters, and on p618). Another option, if you can't be bothered contacting places individually, is to use one of the many online booking services that cover South Africa. Because most charge listings fees, the cheapest places usually aren't included. Camping grounds (including those with self-catering accommodation) are also not listed, and pickings are slim outside major tourist centres.

- www.bookabed.co.za Covers most provinces.
- www.bookaholiday.co.za For Cape Town and the Garden Route.
- www.farmstay.co.za For farm stays.
- www.hostelafrica.com Hostels across Africa; also takes Baz Bus bookings.
- www.portfoliocollection.com For upscale B&Bs, private game reserve lodges and boutique hotels, also in Swaziland.
- www.sabreakaway.co.za Mostly upmarket listings; covers most provinces, plus Swaziland's Ezulwini Valley.
- www.seastay.co.za For coastal areas.
- www.wheretostay.co.za Covers most of the country, and also includes disabled-friendly listings.

B&Bs & Guesthouses

B&Bs and guesthouses (the line between them is often indistinguishable) are two of South Africa's accommodation treats. They're found throughout the country, in cities as well as small towns, and in rural areas you can often stay on farms. Some of the cheapest places aren't much to write home about, but on the whole standards are high, and rooms are generally excellent value.

Unlike British B&Bs, many South African establishments offer much more than someone's spare room, and unlike motels they are individual and often luxurious. Antique furniture, a private veranda, big gardens and a pool are common. In the Winelands north of Cape Town, and in other rural areas, wonderful settings are also part of the deal. Many have separate guest entrances and private bathrooms. Breakfasts are usually large and delectable. Prices start around R400 per double, including breakfast and private bathroom.

In Soweto (p424), Khayelitsha (p165) and several other areas, you can also stay in township B&Bs, which are an excellent way to get insights into township life. Many owners offer tours of the township, and unparalleled African hospitality. Expect to pay from about R200 per person.

Camping

Camping grounds and caravan parks have long been the accommodation of choice for many South African families. Most towns have an inexpensive municipal camping ground and caravan park, ranging from nice to unappealing. Those near larger towns are often not safe. Privately run camping grounds, and those in national

parcs are much better. These are invariably well equipped and pleasant, with ablution blocks, power points, cooking areas and water supply.

In tourist areas, there are often fancy resorts, complete with swimming pool, restaurant and mini-market. Camping prices are either per person (averaging R80) or per site (averaging R100 for two people, plus R10 per additional person). Camping grounds in popular areas are often booked out during school holidays.

Many caravan parks ban nonporous groundsheets (which are sewn in to most small tents) to protect the grass. If you're only staying a night or two, you can usually convince the manager that your tent won't do any harm. Some caravan parks don't allow tents at all, though if you explain that you're a foreigner without a caravan, it's usually possible to get a site.

In Lesotho and Swaziland, apart from sites in national parks and nature reserves, there are few official camping grounds. However, it's usually possible to free-camp (ie camp anywhere). Always ask permission from elders in the nearest village before setting up, both out of respect for the local community and to minimise any security risks. As a local courtesy, you may be offered a hut for the night; expect to pay about R5 for this. Free-camping isn't recommended in South Africa.

Hostels

South Africa is backpacker-friendly, with a profusion of hostels. However, most of these are clustered in popular areas such as Cape Town and along the Garden Route, so there are still large areas of the country where camping is the only option for shoestringers. Most hostels are of a high standard, with Internet access, self-catering facilities and a travellers bulletin board. Many offer meals, and all can dispense information on the area and on the best transport connections. Many are also on the Baz Bus route (p417), or staff may be willing to collect you at the nearest stop. In addition to dorm beds (which average R80 per night), hostels often also offer private rooms from about R180 per double, and some are willing to let doubles as singles for a bit less. Some hostels will also allow you to pitch a tent on their grounds.

ACCOMMODATION PRICES

Watch out for advertising that boasts room rates that look too good to be true. If a hotel touts rooms costing R200, this usually means R200 *per person* in a twin or double room, with a single room priced, for example, at R300. Prices for double rooms in this book are quoted per room, not per person. Except as noted, prices in this book refer to rooms with bathroom, excluding breakfast and for high season weekends. However, note that Cape Town accommodation prices include breakfast. Prices quoted with half board include breakfast and dinner; those quoted with full board include all meals. 'All-inclusive' prices – mainly found in listings for wildlife lodges – generally cover all meals, wildlife drives and sometimes also park entry fees.

In Swaziland, there are backpacker hostels in Mbabane, the Ezulwini Valley and Manzini; in Lesotho, you'll find them in or near Malealea, Semonkong, Mokhotlong and Sani Pass. Prices and facilities are similar to those in South Africa. Many towns in Lesotho also have Agricultural Training Centres or Farmers' Training Centres that accommodate travellers on a space-available basis. Rooms are simple but adequate, with shared bathroom, and rates (R50 per person throughout the country) make it a good deal. Most have a communal kitchen.

While hostels affiliated with the international Youth Hostel Association (YHA) are thin on the ground in South Africa, it's worth carrying a YHA (or alternatively, Hostelling International) card if you happen to have one already, as it may entitle you to discounts with some bus lines, tour operators, surf shops and more. See www.hihostels.com for links to national YHAs and membership information.

Hotels

There are a few decent old-style country hotels, where you can get a double room from R250, have a meal and catch up on gossip in the pub. However, most in the budget category are too run-down for comfort. The selection is better for midrange, where you can expect good value and atmospheric surroundings from about R350 per double.

ABUSING RIGHTS OF ADMISSION *Simon Richmond*

Because of its recent history of apartheid, racial discrimination remains a prominent issue in South Africa, one that nearly everyone is sensitive about. When a Cape Town newspaper, the *Cape Argus*, recently ran an investigation into whether backpacker lodges were using race-based criteria when they accepted guests, what they found was disturbing. Two undercover reporters – one young black man, one young white woman – were sent to six of the city's lodges; at three the black reporter was told the lodge was full, while his white counterpart was offered a room.

The lodges that had refused entry to the black reporter defended their rights to decide whom to grant admission to. Such rights of admission policies are common – not just in backpacker lodges, and not just in South Africa. The security and comfort of existing guests has to be respected, and we acknowledge the necessity for establishments to make split-second decisions on whether a potential customer should be allowed entry or not – and how difficult it is to get this right all the time.

From the *Cape Argus's* investigation and other reports sent to Lonely Planet it would seem that rights of admission policies are occasionally abused. In particular, if you're a black or coloured South African male, the chances of you being refused entry are likely to be higher than if you're a black or coloured South African female, a white South African or an overseas visitor. This could happen whether you just turn up at a hostel or make an advance booking.

Establishments rated by the South African Grading Council can be stripped of their stars if found to be racially discriminating against guests. We urge all travellers who experience racial discrimination to share their stories with both local tourism authorities and us – such information is taken into account for upcoming guides.

More common are chain hotels, which are found in all major cities and tourist areas. The main ones include the following:

Formula 1 (☎ 011-807 0750; www.hotelformula1.co.za) The cheapest, with functional but cramped three-person rooms from R229 without breakfast.

City Lodge (☎ 011-884 5327; www.citylodge.co.za) Decent value, with Road Lodges (slightly superior standards to Formula 1, for about R285 per tr); Town Lodges (around R520 per double); City Lodges (quite pleasant, with good buffet breakfasts from about R700 per double); and Courtyard Hotels (about R940 per double).

Holiday Inn (☎ 0861-447 744, 011-461 9744; www.southern.sun.com) No-frills rooms in 'Express by Holiday Inn' hotels; better rooms with minimal service at 'Garden Court' hotels; and more comforts at 'Holiday Inn' hotels. Ask about special weekend deals.

Southern Sun Group (☎ 0861-447 744, 011-461 9744; www.southern.sun.com) In addition to running South Africa's Holiday Inn chain, it also operates various more-expensive hotels, including those under the InterContinental name.

Protea (☎ 0861-119 000, 021-430 5000; www.protea-hotels.com) A network of three- to five-star hotels; Protea's Prokard Club gives a 20% discount to members.

Sun International (☎ 011-780 7800; www.sun-international.co.za) Runs top-end, resort-style hotels in Swaziland and the former homelands, with casinos attached (left over from the apartheid era, when gambling was illegal in South Africa but legal in the homelands). Standards are generally high and package deals are available.

Lodges

In and around national parks, especially Kruger National Park, you can relax comfortably in bush settings. Accommodation is usually in a safari-style tent, or in a luxurious lodge. Expect all the amenities that you would find in a top-end hotel (including en-suite bathroom with running hot and cold water, comfortable bedding, delicious cuisine etc), although many of these places don't have telephones and televisions. Most luxury lodges charge 'all-inclusive' rates, which include wildlife drives and meals.

Self-Catering Accommodation

This can be excellent value, from around R500 per four-person cottage (also called chalets, cabins and rondavels). Farm cottages are usually the least expensive. Small town information centres are the best places to find out about these, and in a small community there's a chance that you'll get a ride to the cottage if you don't have transport.

Self-catering chalets or cottages are also often available in caravan parks and camping grounds, both municipal and private, and are common in coastal and tourist areas.

Apart from the occasional run-down place with just a mattress and basin, most self-catering accommodation comes with

bedding, towels and a fully equipped kitchen, though confirm what is included in advance. In some farm cottages you'll have to do without electricity, and you might even have to pump water.

The **South African National (SAN) Parks Board** (☎ 012-428 9111; www.sanparks.org) has good-value, fully equipped bungalows and cottages. These are aimed at family groups and start at around R550/935 for two/four people. Many parks also have simpler huts, with shared bathrooms and kitchens from around R200 per double.

ACTIVITIES

Thanks to South Africa's diverse terrain and favourable climate, almost anything is possible – from ostrich riding to the world's highest bungee jump. Good facilities and instruction mean that most activities are accessible to anyone, whatever their experience level.

There are dozens of operators. In addition to the ones listed here, ask other travellers and at hostels. Try to book day or overnight trips as close to your destination as possible. For example, if you're in Durban and want to visit a reserve further north, it's better (and usually cheaper) to travel to a hostel closer to the reserve and take a day trip from there, rather than booking a longer trip from Durban.

Aerial Pursuits

Ideal weather conditions and an abundance of high points from which to launch yourself make South Africa a fine destination for aerial pursuits. Added attractions of taking to the South African skies are that it is relatively inexpensive, compared with elsewhere in the world, and conditions are generally favourable year-round. A helpful contact for getting started is the **Aero Club of South Africa** (☎ 0861-018 018; www.aeroclub.org.za).

South Africa is one of the world's top destinations for paragliding, particularly Cape Town's Table Mountain. Although the flying is good year-round, the strongest thermals are from November to April. For experienced pilots, airspace restrictions are minimal and there's great potential for long-distance, cross-country flying. **South African Hang Gliding and Paragliding Association** (☎ 012-668 1219; www.sahpa.co.za) can provide names of operators, and numerous schools

offer courses for beginners. In Cape Town, try **Paragliding Cape Town** (☎ 021-554 0592). In Swaziland, **Emoyeni Paragliding School** (☎ 505 7405; airsports@realnet.co.sz) in Manzini has paragliding courses.

Good places to float over the countryside in a hot air balloon include Sabie (p449) and the surrounding Mpumalanga area. Micro-light flying is another way to get a bird's eye view on things. Check out www.otto.co.za/micro/for an overview and a list of airfields.

South Africa boasts the world's highest bungee jump (p242) at Bloukrans River Bridge, between Plettenberg Bay and Storms River. There are several other popular jumps as well, including one at Gouritz Bridge, near Mossel Bay (p211).

Bird-Watching

With its enormous diversity of habitats, South Africa is a paradise for bird-watchers. Top spots include the following:

Cape Peninsula & West Coast Cape of Good Hope, within Table Mountain National Park (p164), is excellent for seabird-watching, as is West Coast National Park (p232), about 120km to the north.

Kruger National Park (p466) One of the continent's best areas for birding; the south and the far north are considered the prime areas, and the park is known particularly for its raptors and migrants.

Northern KwaZulu-Natal Mkhuzi Game Reserve (p345) hosts over 400 species within its 36,000 hectares, and the Greater St Lucia Wetland Park (p339) protects one of the most significant water-bird breeding grounds in Southern Africa.

Eyries in Lesotho's Maluti Mountains near the eastern Drakensberg escarpment, and Swaziland's Malolotja Nature Reserve (p590) are also favourable destinations.

There are bird-watching clubs in all major South African cities, and most parks and reserves can provide you with birding lists. Other useful contacts include **Southern Africa Birding** (www.sabirding.co.za), which also covers Lesotho and Swaziland; **Birdlife South Africa** (www.birdlife.org.za) and **Cape Birding Route** (www.capebirdingroute.org).

Many parks and reserves have field guides on hand, but it's still worth bringing your own.

Canoeing, Kayaking & Rafting

South Africa has few major rivers, but the ones that do flow year-round offer reward-

SAFE DIVING

In popular diving areas, including Sodwana Bay, we've had some reports about slipshod diving operations. When choosing an operator, make quality, rather than cost, the priority. Factors to consider include an operator's experience and qualifications; knowledgeableness and seriousness of staff; whether it's a fly-by-night operation or well established; and the type and condition of equipment and frequency of maintenance. Assess whether the overall attitude is professional, and ask about safety considerations – radios, oxygen, emergency evacuation procedures, boat reliability and back-up engines, first-aid kits, safety flares and life jackets. On longer dives, do you get an energising meal, or just tea and biscuits?

An advantage of using operators offering PADI- or NAUI-certified courses is that you'll have the flexibility to go elsewhere in the world and have your certification recognised at other PADI or NAUI dive centres. To check an operator's credentials, contact the **South Africa Underwater Federation** (☎ 021-930 6549; www.sa-underwater.org.za).

ing canoeing and rafting. Popular ones include the Blyde and Sabie Rivers, both in Mpumalanga province; the waterways around Wilderness (p218) and Wilderness National Park (p219) in the Western Cape; the Senqu (Orange) River, especially through Augrabies Falls National Park (p541); and the Tugela (p312). There's some serene canoeing at the Greater St Lucia Wetland Park (p339). In Swaziland, the classic rafting destination is the Great Usutu River (p595).

Rafting is highly rain-dependent, with the best months in most areas from December/January to April. Good contacts include **Felix Unite** (☎ 021-425 5181; www.felixunite.com), **Hardy Ventures** (☎ 013-751 1693; www.hardyventure.com) and **Intrapid Rafting** (☎ 021-461 4918). In Swaziland, the main operator is **Swazi Trails** (☎ 416 2180; www.swazitrails.co.sz).

For sea kayaking, try the Cape Town-based **Coastal Kayak** (☎ 021-439 1134; www.kayak.co.za) and the **Sea Kayaking Association of South Africa** (☎ 021-790 5611; www.doorway.co.za/kayak/recksasa/).

Diving

Take the plunge off the southernmost end of the African continent into your choice of oceans. To the west, the main dive sites are around the Cape Peninsula, known for its many wrecks and giant kelp forests. To the east, the main area is the KwaZulu-Natal north coast where – particularly around Sodwana Bay – there's some excellent warm-water diving with beautiful coral reefs and the chance to see dolphins and sometimes whale sharks. There are several sites off the Eastern Cape coast near Port

Elizabeth, and many resort towns along the Garden Route have diving schools.

Conditions vary widely. The best time to dive the KwaZulu-Natal shoreline is from May to September, when visibility tends to be highest. In the west, along the Atlantic seaboard, the water is cold year-round, but at its most diveable, with many days of high visibility, between November and January/February.

All coastal towns where diving is possible have dive outfitters, and costs are generally lower here than elsewhere in the region. Expect to pay from around R2000 for a four-day open-water certification course, and from about R200 for full equipment rental. With the exception of Sodwana Bay during the warmer months (when a 3mm wetsuit will suffice), you'll need at least a 5mm wetsuit for many sites, and a drysuit for some sites to the south and west. Strong currents and often windy conditions mean that advanced divers can find challenges all along the coast. Sodwana Bay is probably the best all-round choice for beginners.

A variant on all this is shark diving, which involves being lowered in a cage and seeing sharks up close without having to worry that you'll become their next meal. The main place for this is Gansbaai near Hermanus (p189). Some operators allow snorkellers in the cage, too, if you're not a qualified diver. While shark diving offers an introduction to these shadows of the deep, there are some ecological downsides. The most obvious problem is that the sharks are baited to draw them close, and so come to associate humans with food.

Fishing

Sea fishing is popular, with a wide range of species in the warm and cold currents that flow past the east and west coasts, respectively. River fishing, especially for introduced trout, is popular in parks and reserves, with some particularly good highland streams in the Drakensberg. Licences are available for a few rand at park offices, and some places rent equipment. Useful websites include **South African Fishing** (www.safishing.co.za), **South African Bass Fishing** (www.bassfishing.co.za) and **Fly Fishing South Africa** (www.flyfisher.co.za).

Lesotho is an insider's tip among trout anglers. The season runs from September to May (same in South Africa), and there is a small licence fee, a size limit and a bag limit of 12 fish. Only rod and line and artificial nonspinning flies may be used. For more information, contact the **Ministry of Agriculture Livestock Division** (☎ 2232 3986; Private Bag A82, Maseru 100). The nearest fishing area to Maseru is the Makhaleng River, 2km downstream from Molimo-Nthuse Lodge (a two-hour drive from Maseru). Other places to fish are the Malibamat'so River near Oxbow; the Mokhotlong River near Mokhotlong in the northeast; and the Thaba-Tseka main dam.

Hiking

SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa is wonderful for hiking, with an excellent system of well-marked trails varied enough to suit every ability. Some trails have accommodation – from camping to simple huts with electricity and running water – and all must be booked well in advance. Many have limits as to how many hikers can be on them at any one time. Most longer trails and wilderness areas require hikers to be in a group of at least three.

Designated wilderness areas, such as Cedarberg Wilderness Area (p235), have off-trail hiking only. Little information is available on suggested routes, and it's up to you to survive on your own.

KwaZulu-Natal Nature Conservation (KZN Wildlife; ☎ 033-845 1000; www.kznwildlife.com) controls most trails in KwaZulu-Natal. Elsewhere, most trails are administered by the **SAN Parks Board** (☎ 012-428 9111; www.sanparks.org) or the various Forest Region authorities. To find out about local hiking clubs, contact **Hiking South Africa** (☎ 083-535 4538; www.hiking-south-africa.info).

Shorter hikes, from an hour up to a full day, are possible almost everywhere and require no advance arrangements. Prime areas include the Cape Peninsula near Cape Point and the Drakensberg.

It's also possible to take guided walks in national parks, accompanied by armed rangers. You won't cover much distance, but they offer the chance to experience the wild with nothing between you and nature; see p86.

Safety is not a major issue on most trails, although on a few longer trails there have been muggings. Check with the local hiking club when booking your hike. On longer trails, hike in a group, and limit the valuables you carry.

Hiking is possible year-round, although you'll need to be prepared in summer for extremes of wet and heat. The best time is March to October.

Some useful books include *Drakensberg Walks* and *Western Cape Walks* by David Bristow, and *Hiking Trails of Southern Africa* by Willie and Sandra Olivier. Jaynee Levy's *Complete Guide to Walks & Trails in Southern Africa* is too heavy to carry, but good for an overview.

LESOTHO

The entire country is ideal for hiking, away from major towns. In particular, the eastern highlands and the Drakensberg crown attract serious hikers, with Sehlabathebe (p572) and Ts'ehlanyane (p563) parks, Bokong Nature Reserve (p567) and the area around Sani Top (p565) among the highlights. Malealea (p568) and Semonkong (p567) also make ideal bases. Wherever you are, there are few organised hiking trails as in South Africa (just footpaths) and you can walk almost everywhere, accompanied by a compass, and the relevant topographical maps (p555).

In all areas, especially the remote eastern highlands, rugged conditions can make walking dangerous if you aren't experienced and prepared. Temperatures can plummet to near-zero even in summer, and thunderstorms and thick fog are common. Waterproof gear and warm clothes are essential. In summer many rivers flood and fords can become dangerous. Be prepared to change your route or wait until the river subsides. By the end of the dry season, good water can be scarce, especially in higher

SOUTH AFRICA'S TOP HIKES

Following are some of South Africa's top hiking trails and their booking contacts; more details are given in the relevant chapters.

Cape Peninsula & Western Cape

Hoerikwaggo Hiking Trails (p107; Table Mountain National Park; ☎ 021-465 8515; www.hoerikwaggotrails.co.za) A series of three trails (one now open, the other two to open soon) that take you from City Bowl over the mountain, and ultimately along the stunningly beautiful Atlantic Coast to Cape Point.

Boesmansklouf Trail (p201; Cape Nature Conservation; ☎ 028-425 5020; www.capenature.org.za) Two days of hiking from Greyton to McGregor through the majestic *fynbos*-clad Riviersonderend Mountains.

Whale Hiking Trail (p193; De Hoop Nature Reserve; ☎ 028-425 5020) Five days of hiking along the coastline in De Hoop Nature Reserve, with the added bonus of whale-watching opportunities in season.

Eastern Cape

Otter Trail (p242; SAN Parks Board; ☎ 012- 428 9111; www.sanparks.org) Five days on the coast along the Garden Route (note that this trail is nearly always booked out).

Tsitsikamma Trail (p242; Forestry Department; ☎ 042-281 1712) A five-day hike running inland through the forests, parallel to the Otter Trail but hiked in the opposite direction (this trail is rarely booked out).

Amathole Trail (p273; Department of Water Affairs & Forestry; ☎ 043-642 2571; www.amatola.co.za) Up to six days in the former Ciskei homelands, ending at the Tyumie River near Hogsback.

Free State

Rhebok Hiking Trail (p385; SAN Parks Board; ☎ 012-428 9111; www.sanparks.org) Two days in Golden Gate Highlands National Park.

KwaZulu-Natal

Giant's Cup (p356; KZN Wildlife; ☎ 033-845 1000) Up to five days in the southern Drakensberg. There are also wilderness trails and guided walks in Hluhluwe-Imfolozi, Mkhuzi and Lake St Lucia parks and reserves.

Limpopo

Hanglip Trail (p498; Komatiland Eco-Tourism; ☎ 013-754 2724; www.komatiecotourism.co.za) Up to two days in the verdant Soutpansberg Range.

Mpumalanga

Blyde River Canyon Hiking Trail (p454; Mpumalanga Parks Board; ☎ 013-759 5432; mpbinfo@cis.co.za) Up to 2½ days in the Blyde River Canyon area.

Kruger National Park (p471; SAN Parks Board; ☎ 012-428 9111; www.sanparks.org) Wilderness trails and guided walks.

Northern Cape

Klipspringer Hiking Trail (p541; Augrabies Falls National Park; ☎ 054-452 9200) Three days of stunning scenery along the banks of the Senqu (Orange) River.

Kodaspiet Trail (p547; Richtersveld National Park; ☎ 027-831 1506) Two days wandering amid incredible mountain desert landscapes.

areas. For more information see the boxed text on p568.

SWAZILAND

The best place for hiking is Malolotja Nature Reserve (p590). Mlawula Nature Reserve (p593) also has good trails. In almost any rural area, you can set out on foot, following the generations-old tracks that criss-cross the countryside. Weather conditions aren't as extreme as in Lesotho, but if you're hiking during the summer, be prepared for torrential downpours and hail storms.

Horse Riding & Pony Trekking

In South Africa and Swaziland it's easy to find rides ranging from several hours to several days, and for all experience levels. Particularly good areas in South Africa include the KwaZulu-Natal Drakensberg (p346), Limpopo's Waterberg range (p496), and the Wild Coast (p283). Riding is also offered in several national parks, including Addo Elephant (p255) and Golden Gate (p385) National Parks. In Swaziland, you can ride at Mlilwane Wildlife Sanctuary (p586), among other places.

Some contacts:

Equus Horse Safaris (www.equus.co.za) Waterberg.

Fynbos Horse Trails (www.fynbostrails.com) Western Cape.

Horizon Horseback Adventures (www.ridinginafrica.com) Waterberg.

Khotso Horse Trails (www.khotsotrails.co.za) Drakensberg.

Nyanza Horse Trails (nyanza@africaonline.co.sz) Swaziland.

Wild Coast Trails (www.wildcoast.org.za) Wild Coast.

In Lesotho, pony trekking on tough Basotho ponies is a popular way of seeing the highlands; see p568.

Kloofing (Canyoning)

Kloofing (called canyoning elsewhere), is a mix of climbing, hiking, swimming and some serious jumping. It has a small but rapidly growing following in South Africa. You can give this a try in Cape Town (with several nearby possibilities, see p122) and along the Drakensberg Escarpment (p445) in Mpumalanga. Operators who can sort you out include **Adventure World** (www.adventurevillage.co.za), **Day Trippers** (www.daytrippers.co.za) and **Abseil Africa** (www.abseilafrica.co.za). There's

a definite element of risk in the sport, so when hunting for operators, check their credentials carefully before signing up.

Mountain Biking

There are trails almost everywhere in South Africa. Some suggestions to get you started: the De Hoop Nature Reserve (p193), with overnight and day trails; the ride up (and down) Sani Pass, on the border between South Africa and Lesotho (p565); Citrusdal (p236), with a network of trails; the area around Cederberg Wilderness area (p235); Mountain Zebra National Park (p266); Knysna (p219) and surrounding area, with a good selection of trails; Sabie (p449), with several excellent trails; and Swaziland's Mlilwane Wildlife Sanctuary (p586). Cape Town is something of an unofficial national hub.

Useful sources of information include **Mountain Bike South Africa** (www.mtbsa.co.za); **Mountain Bike South Africa e-zine** (www.mtb.org.za); the **Linx Africa trail listing** (www.linx.co.za/trails/lists/bikelist.html); and Paul Leger's *Guide to Mountain Bike Trails in the Western Cape*. The bimonthly *Ride* is the main South African mountain-biking magazine.

Rock Climbing

Some of the most challenging climbing is on the close-to-sheer faces of the KwaZulu-Natal Drakensberg. Another of South Africa's top sites is in Mpumalanga at Waterval Boven. The **South African Climbing Info Network** (www.saclimb.co.za) has listings and photos of many other climbing and bouldering sites. For information on regional clubs, contact the **Mountain Club of South Africa** (MCSA; ☎ 021-465 3412; www.mcsa.org.za). **Roc'n Rope** (☎ 013-257 0363; www.rocrope.com) is another useful contact.

Surfing

Most surfers will have heard of Jeffrey's Bay, but South Africa offers myriad alternatives, particularly along the Eastern Cape coast from Port Alfred northwards. The best time of the year for surfing the southern and eastern coasts is autumn and early winter (from about April to July).

Boards and gear can be bought in most of the big coastal cities. New boards cost around US\$185 and good-quality second-hand boards around US\$100. If you plan to surf Jeffrey's Bay, you'll need a decent-sized board, as it's a fast wave.

For more information see the boxed texts on p215 and p245. Also check out www.wavescape.co.za, and **Zig Zag** (www.zigzag.co.za), South Africa's main surf magazine.

Whale-Watching

South Africa is considered one of the world's best spots to sight these graceful giants from land, without needing to go out in a boat. Southern right and humpback whales are regularly seen offshore between June/July and November, with occasional sightings also of Bryde's and killer whales. Hermanus (p188) – where southern right whales come to calve – is the unofficial whale-watching capital, complete with a whale crier and an annual Whale Festival.

At nearby Walker Bay, whales approach to within 50m of the shoreline. Other favoured spots include the False Bay shoreline, especially between Cape Point and Muizenberg, and from Gordon's Bay southeast; and Mossel (p211) and Plettenberg (p225) Bays. The whales continue on around the Cape and up the KwaZulu-Natal coast, although by the time they reach Durban, they're often considerably further out to sea. See the boxed text on p187 for more information.

Wildlife-Watching

South Africa's populations of large animals are one of the country's biggest attractions. In comparison with other countries in the region (Botswana and Zambia, for example), wildlife-watching in South Africa tends to be very accessible, with good roads and excellent accommodation for all categories of traveller. It is also comparatively inexpensive, although there are plenty of pricier choices for those seeking a luxury experience in the bush. For more, see the Environment chapter (p85) and Kruger National Park chapter (p470).

Swaziland also offers some excellent wildlife-watching, in generally low-key surroundings. Among the highlights: Mlilwane Wildlife Sanctuary (p586), Mkhaya Game Reserve (p594) and Hlane Royal National Park (p593).

BOOKS

Following is a listing of some books – a mix of fiction and nonfiction – to begin immersing yourself in regional life and culture. Also see p22.

A Short History of Lesotho from the Late Stone Age to the 1993 Elections by Stephen J Gill. A concise and readable history of the Mountain Kingdom.

Basali: Stories by and about Women in Lesotho by K Limakatso. Good insights into Lesotho's rural life as seen through the eyes of local women.

Country of my Skull by Antjie Krog. A wrenching recounting of the hearings of the Truth & Reconciliation Commission by a prominent Afrikaaner journalist.

Indaba, My Children by Credo Mutwa. An excellent compendium of traditional mythology and folktales.

No Future Without Forgiveness by Desmond Tutu.

Another, somewhat more hope-filled, chronicling of the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission by its chairman.

Strikes Have Followed Me All My Life by Emma Mashinini. A powerful recounting of one woman's struggle against domination and injustice.

The Heart of the Hunter: Customs & Myths of the African Bushman by Laurens van der Post.

An intriguing accounting of southern Africa's San people and their culture.

The Wild Almond Line by Larry Schwartz. A memoir of growing up in a segregated country and being a conscript in the apartheid-era army.

BUSINESS HOURS

Usual business hours are listed inside the front cover. Exceptions to this have been noted in individual listings in this book. In addition to regular banking hours, many foreign exchange bureaus remain open until 5pm Monday through Friday, and until noon on Saturday. In urban areas, many supermarkets stay open until 6pm or 8pm and are also open 9am to noon on Sundays.

CHILDREN South Africa

South Africa is an eminently suitable destination if you're travelling with children. With its abundance of national parks, beaches, swimming pools and hiking trails, plus a good collection of museums and a handful of amusement parks, it offers plenty to do for travellers of all ages in a generally hazard-free setting. Most South Africans are welcoming to children, and you should have no shortage of offers for assistance. For some help sorting things out, and for equipment rental or purchase, try the Cape Town-based **Tiny Tourists** (www.tinytourists.com).

PRACTICALITIES

Baby-changing rooms are not common, though clean restrooms abound, and in

most you should be able to find a make-shift spot to change a nappy (diaper). Nappies, powdered milk and baby food are widely available, except in very rural areas. It's difficult to find brands of processed baby food without added sugar. These are available at supermarkets in all major towns; always check the security seal on jars, and the expiry date. Short-term day-care is becoming more common, and many upscale hotels and resorts in tourist areas can arrange childcare.

Many wildlife lodges have restrictions on children under 12, so in most national parks and reserves the main accommodation options will be camping or self-catering. Otherwise, family-oriented accommodation, such as triple-bed hotel rooms and four- to six-person self-catering cottages, are common throughout South Africa, and most hotels can provide cots. Many hotels offer children's discounts, averaging 50%. Children under 12 are also usually admitted at discounted rates to parks (free for children under two years of age, discounted for those aged under 16), museums and other places where entry fees are charged.

Most car-rental agencies will provide safety seats, but you'll need to book them in advance, and usually pay extra. When planning your itinerary, try to minimise long distances between stops.

Breast-feeding in public won't raise an eyebrow among Africans, but in other circles it's best to be discreet.

Seek medical advice on malaria prophylactics for children if you'll be in malarial areas (anywhere in the lowveld, including Kruger National Park). Swimming in streams should generally be avoided, due to the risk of bilharzia infection. Otherwise, there are few health risks. Should your child become ill, good-quality medical care is available in all major cities.

Lonely Planet's *Travel with Children* by Cathy Lanigan is full of tips for keeping children and parents happy on the road.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Botanical gardens, an aquarium, the cable car to Table Mountain, swimming pools, good facilities, and a low-key ambience make Cape Town the best urban destination if you're travelling with children. Among smaller towns, Oudtshoorn (p207)

deserves mention because of its ostriches and the nearby Cango Caves.

For seaside relaxation, some of the beaches near Cape Town and along the Garden Route are ideal for families. One to try, because of its calmer waters and sheltered setting, is at Arnister (p193).

For older children, hiking in the Drakensberg is another option.

Wildlife-watching is suitable for older children who have the patience to sit for long periods in a car, but less suitable for younger ones. Addo Elephant National Park is one of the better destinations, in part because it's malaria-free, and in part because of the likelihood of sighting elephants. Kruger National Park is tempting because of its easy accessibility and family-friendly rest camps. However think twice before going, as it's in a malaria area. If possible, try to visit in the winter when the risk of malaria is lower, and come prepared with nets, repellent and suitable clothing.

Lesotho & Swaziland

Lesotho and Swaziland are also welcoming destinations for children. Swaziland in particular is a good family destination, with a very child-friendly attitude and a relaxed pace. The main caveat is the presence of malaria, which is a real risk in lower-lying areas of the country. There's no malaria in Lesotho, but because of its more rugged terrain and conditions, it's better suited for older children who would enjoy hiking or pony trekking (note that most pony trekking centres only arrange treks for those over 12 years old).

Many hotels in Swaziland offer family-friendly accommodation, and there are amusements such as mini golf to keep children occupied. In Lesotho, everything is a bit rougher around the edges, though if you (and your children) are of an adventurous bent, you'll likely find travel here straightforward and enjoyable. Informal childcare arrangements can be made in both countries; ask at your hotel. Major hotels have Western-style bathrooms, but in rural areas often the only choice is a long-drop. Nappies, powdered milk and baby food are available in Mbabane, Manzini and Maseru, with only a limited selection in smaller towns.

There are reasonable medical facilities in Mbabane and Maseru, but for anything serious, you'll need to head to South Africa.

CLIMATE CHARTS

South Africa has been favoured by nature with one of the most temperate climates on the African continent, and plenty of sunny, dry days. The main factors influencing conditions are altitude and the surrounding oceans (see p20 for more on when to visit).

COURSES

Language

There are numerous language schools for learning Xhosa, Zulu and Afrikaans, including the following:

Inlingua Cape Town (☎ 021-419 0494; www.inlingua.co.za) Afrikaans.

Interlink Cape Town (☎ 021-439 9834; www.interlink.co.za) Afrikaans, Xhosa.

Language Teaching Centre Cape Town (☎ 021-425 3585; www.languageteachingcentre.co.za) Afrikaans, Xhosa.

University of Natal (☎ 031-260 2510; www.nu.ac

.za/department/default.asp?dept=zuludund; Durban) Zulu.

University of the Witwatersrand (☎ 011-717 4245; http://slls.uplay.co.za/index.aspx?Action=AFL) Zulu.

A good contact for getting below South Africa's surface is **TALK** (Transfer of African Language Knowledge; ☎ 011-487 1798; www.phaphama.org). They organise 'immersion visits' in which you live in a homestay arrangement in either a township or rural area while receiving an hour or so daily of instruction in an African language and getting introduced to local culture. Costs vary, but average about R600 per person for a three-night stay. The main focus is Soweto, but they can also sort out visits in other parts of the country.

Wine Tasting

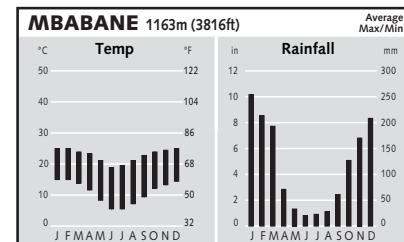
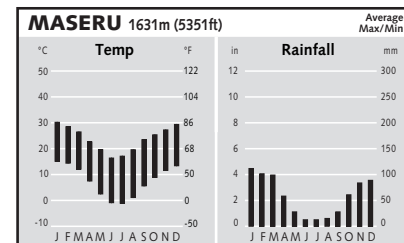
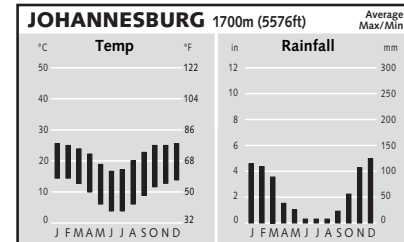
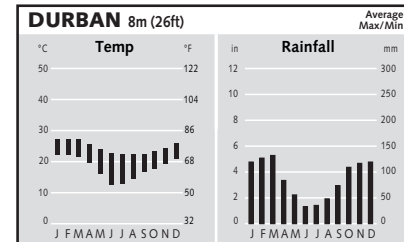
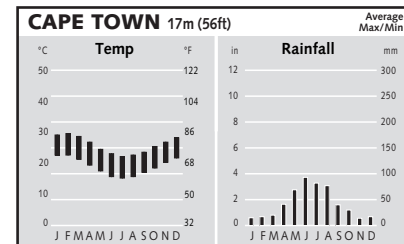
For the ultimate in fine living, ensconce yourself in an atmospheric B&B in the Winelands and enrol in a wine-tasting course. Some useful contacts:

Cape Wine Academy (☎ 021-889 8844; www.capewineacademy.co.za) Based in Stellenbosch, and runs courses in both Stellenbosch and Cape Town.

Nose Wine Bar (Map pp116-17; ☎ 021-425 2200; www.thenose.co.za; Cape Quarter, Dixon St, Waterkant) Runs wine-tasting courses.

CUSTOMS

You're permitted to bring 1L of spirits, 2L of wine, 400 cigarettes and up to R1250 worth of souvenirs into South Africa without



paying duties. For more details, contact the **Department of Customs & Excise** (☎ 012-422 4000, 0800 002 870; Private Bag X923, Pretoria 0001). The import and export of protected animal products such as ivory is not permitted.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Crime

Crime is the national obsession and, apart from car accidents, it's the major risk that you'll face in South Africa. However, try to keep things in perspective, and remember that despite the statistics and newspaper headlines, the majority of travellers visit the country without incident.

The risks are highest in Jo'burg, followed by some township areas and other urban centres. Daylight muggings are common in certain sections of Jo'burg, and the city's metro train system has had a problem with violent crime. No matter where you are, you can minimise the risks by following basic safety precautions, including the following:

- Never carry anything you can't afford to lose; in particular, don't flash around a camera. Use reliable safes wherever you can find them for storing your documents and valuables.
- Never look as though you might be carrying valuables, and leave watches, necklaces and earrings out of sight; wearing an expensive-looking T-shirt makes you look just as rich as wearing jewellery or a suit does. Completely avoid external money pouches.
- Avoid groups of young men; trust older mixed-sex groups.
- Divide your cash into several stashes, and always have some 'decoy' money or a 'decoy' wallet readily accessible to hand over if you are mugged. Don't keep money in your back pocket.
- Decoy wallet or not, keep a small amount of cash handy and separate from your other money so that you don't need to pull out a large wad of bills for making purchases.
- One of the greatest dangers during muggings or carjackings, especially in Jo'burg, is that your assailants will assume that you are armed, and that you will kill them if you get a chance. Stay calm, and don't resist or give them any reason to think that you will fight back.

- Listen to local advice on unsafe areas.
- Avoid deserted areas day and night, and especially avoid the commercial business district areas of larger cities at night and weekends.
- If you're going to visit a township – and it will certainly be one of the highlights of your visit to South Africa – go with a trusted guide or as part of a tour.
- Try not to look apprehensive or lost.
- Avoid driving at night and, day or night, keep your doors locked and windows up. Especially if you'll be driving alone, it's worth hiring a mobile phone. Leave your car in secure parking at night, and don't leave anything valuable inside.

Crime rates are nowhere near as high in Lesotho and Swaziland as they are in South Africa. Maseru has seen an increase in armed robberies, break-ins and carjackings targeting expatriates (though it's still small-scale compared with South Africa), and street crime is rising in Mbabane and Manzini. As long as you follow the basic precautions, you should be fine. Elsewhere in Lesotho and Swaziland, crime is negligible.

Drugs

Dagga or *zol* (marijuana) was an important commodity in the Xhosa's trade with the San. Today it is illegal but widely available. There are heavy penalties for use and possession but many people still use the drug – often quite openly, as you'll discover in some of the backpacker hostels and bars you might frequent. The legal system does not distinguish between soft and hard drugs.

Ecstasy is just as much a part of rave and clubbing culture in South Africa as it is elsewhere. South Africa is also reputed

TRAVEL ADVISORIES

Government travel advisories are good sources of updated security information, and are well worth perusing before heading to South Africa:

Australia (www.dfat.gov.au)

Canada (www.voyage.gc.ca/dest/ctry/report/page-en.asp)

UK (www.fco.gov.uk)

US (http://travel.state.gov)

to be the world's major market for the barbiturate Mandrax, which is now banned in many countries (including South Africa) because of its devastating effects. Drugs such as cocaine and heroin are becoming widely available and their use accounts for much property crime.

DISCOUNT CARDS

A membership card for **Hostelling International** (www.hihostels.com) or the affiliated international Youth Hostel Association entitles you to occasional discounts on bus lines, tour operators, surf shops and more. A valid student ID will also get you discounts for some bus lines, museums etc.

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

South African Embassies & Consulates

Diplomatic representations abroad include the following. For a full listing see www.dfa.gov.za/foreign/sa_abroad/index.htm.

Australia (☎ 02-6273 2424; www.sahc.org.au; Rhodes Pl, Yarralumla, Canberra ACT 2600)

Bhswana (☎ 390 4800; sahcgbats@batsnet.bw; 29 Queens Rd, Gaborone)

Canada (☎ 613-744 0330; www.southafrica-canada.com; 15 Sussex Dr, Ottawa, Ontario K1M 1M8)

France (☎ 01 53 59 23 23; www.afriquesud.net; 59 Quai d'Orsay, 75343 Paris, Cedex 07)

Germany (☎ 030-22 0730; www.suedafrika.org; Tiergartenstrasse 18, Berlin 10785)

Ireland (☎ 01-661 5553; information@saedublin.com; 2nd fl, Alexandra House, Earlsfort Centre, Earlsfort Tce, Dublin 2)

Israel (☎ 03-525 2566; www.safis.co.il; 16th fl, Top Tower, 50 Dizengoff St, 64332, Tel Aviv)

Kenya (☎ 020-282 7100; sahc@afrioonline.co.ke; Roshanmaer Place, Lenana Rd, Nairobi)

Malawi (☎ 01-773 722; sahc@malawi.net; 3rd fl, Kang'ombe House, Robert Mugabe Crescent, Lilongwe)

Mozambique (☎ 01-490059, 491614; sahc@tropical.co.mz; Avenida Eduardo Mondlane 41, Maputo)

Namibia (☎ 061-205 7111; sahcwin@iafrica.com.na; RSA House, cnr Jan Jonker St & Nelson Mandela Ave, Windhoek 9000)

Netherlands (☎ 70-392 4501; www.southafrica.nl; Wassenaarseweg 40, the Hague 2596 CJ)

New Zealand Representation accredited from Australia, see above.

UK (☎ 020-7451 7299; www.southafricahouse.com; South Africa House, Trafalgar Sq, London WC2N 5DP)

USA (☎ 202-232 4400; www.saembassy.org; 3051 Massachusetts Ave NW, Washington DC 20008) Also consulates in New York, Chicago and Los Angeles.

Zimbabwe (☎ 04-753147; dhacon@mweb.co.zw; 7 Elcombe St, Belgravia, Harare)

Lesotho Embassies & Consulates

In countries without Lesotho representation, contact the UK representative. Lesotho's diplomatic representations abroad include the following:

Belgium (☎ 02-705 3976; lesothobruemb@skynet.be; Blvd General Wahis 45, 1030 Brussels)

Germany (☎ 030-257 5720; embleso@yahoo.com; Kurfürstenstrasse 84, 10787 Berlin)

Italy (☎ 06-854 2419; les.rome@flashnet.it; Via Serchio 8, 00198 Rome)

UK (☎ 020-7235 5686; www.lesotholondon.org.uk; 7 Chesham Pl, Belgravia, London SW1 8HN)

USA (☎ 202-797 5533/4; www.lesothoemb-usa.gov.us; 2511 Massachusetts Ave, NW, Washington DC 20008)

Swazi Embassies & Consulates

In countries without Swazi representation, contact the UK representative.

Mozambique (☎ 021-493846, 021-491721; Avenida Kwame Nkrumah, Maputo)

UK (☎ 020-7630 6611; www.swaziland.org.uk; 20 Buckingham Gate, London SW1E 6LB)

USA (☎ 202-234 5002; 1712 New Hampshire Ave, NW, Washington DC 20009)

Embassies & Consulates in South Africa

Most countries have their main embassy in Pretoria, with an office or consulate in Cape Town (which becomes the official embassy during Cape Town's parliamentary sessions). Some countries also maintain consulates in Jo'burg and in Durban.

South Africa is a gold mine for travellers hunting for visas for other African countries. As some of these can be difficult to collect as you travel around, it makes sense to get as many as you can here.

The following list includes some of the more important embassies and consulates; most are open in the mornings only for visa services, usually between 9am and noon. For more listings, check www.dfa.gov.za/foreign/forrep/index.htm.

Australia (Map pp428–9; ☎ 012-342 3740; www.australia.co.za; 292 Orient St, Arcadia, Pretoria)

Botswana High Commission in Pretoria (Map pp428–9; ☎ 012-430 9640; 24 Amos St, Colbyn); Consulate in Cape Town (Map pp110–11; ☎ 021-421 1045; 4th fl, Southern Life Centre, 8 Riebeeck St, City Bowl); Consulate in Jo'burg (Map p402; ☎ 011-403 3748; 2nd fl, Future Bank Bldg, 122 De Korte St, Braamfontein)

Canada High Commission in Pretoria (Map pp428–9; ☎ 012-422 3000; www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/southafrica/; 1103 Arcadia St, Hatfield); Consulate in Cape Town (Map pp110–11; ☎ 021-423 5240; 19th fl, Reserve Bank Bldg, 60 St George's Mall, City Bowl)

France Embassy in Pretoria (Map pp428–9; ☎ 012-425 1600; france@ambafrance-rsa.org; 250 Melk St, New Muckleneuk); Consulate in Cape Town (Map p114; ☎ 021-423 1575; 2 Dean St); Consulate in Jo'burg (Map pp398-9; ☎ 011-778 5600; 3rd fl, Standard Bank Bldg, 191 Jan Smuts Ave, Rosebank)

Germany Embassy in Pretoria (Map pp428–9; ☎ 012-427 8977; germanembassypretoria@gonet.co.za; 180 Blackwood St); Consulate in Cape Town (Map pp110–11; ☎ 021-405 3000; 19th fl, Safmarine House, 22 Riebeeck St)

Ireland Embassy in Pretoria (Map pp428–9; ☎ 012-342 5062; 1st fl, Southern Life Plaza, 1059 Schoeman St); Consulate in Cape Town (Map pp110–11; ☎ 021-423 0431; 54 Keerom St, City Bowl)

Lesotho High Commission in Pretoria (Map pp428–9; ☎ 012-460 7648; 391 Anderson St, Menlo Park); Consulate in Jo'burg (Map p402; ☎ 011-339 3653; 76 Juta St, Indent House, Braamfontein); Consulate in Durban (Map pp306–7; ☎ 031-307 2168; 2nd fl, Westguard House, cnr West & Gardiner Sts)

Mozambique High Commission in Pretoria (Map pp428–9; ☎ 012-401 0300; 529 Edmond St, Arcadia); Consulate in Jo'burg (Map pp398-9; ☎ 011-327 2938, 327 2944; 252 Jeppe St); Consulate in Cape Town (Map pp110–11; ☎ 021-426 2944; 3rd fl, Castle Bldg, 45 Castle St); Consulate in Durban (Map pp306-7; ☎ 031-304 0200; Room 520, 320 West St); Consulate in Nelspruit (Map p458; ☎ 013-753 2089; 43 Brown St)

Namibia (Map pp428–9; ☎ 012-481 9100; secretary@namibia.org.za; 197 Blackwood St, Arcadia, Pretoria)

Netherlands Embassy in Pretoria (Map pp428–9; ☎ 012-344 3910; www.dutchembassy.co.za; 825 Arcadia St); Consulate in Cape Town (Map pp110–11; ☎ 021-421 5660; 100 Strand St, City Bowl)

New Zealand (Map pp428–9; ☎ 012-342 8656; Block C, Hatfield Gardens, Arcadia, Pretoria)

Swaziland High Commission in Pretoria (Map pp428–9; ☎ 012-344 1910; 715 Government Ave, Arcadia); Consulate in Jo'burg (Map p402; ☎ 403 7372, 403 2036; 6th fl, Braamfontein Centre, 23 Jorissen St)

UK High Commission in Pretoria (Map pp428–9; ☎ 012-421 7500; bhcc@icon.co.za; 255 Hill St, Arcadia); Consulate in Cape Town (Map pp110–11; ☎ 021-425 3670; Southern Life Centre, 8 Riebeeck St, City Bowl); Consulate in Durban (Map pp306-7; ☎ 031-305 3041; 22 Gardner St)

USA Embassy in Pretoria (Map pp428–9; ☎ 012-431 4000; http://pretoria.usembassy.gov; 877 Pretorius St, Arcadia); Consulate in Cape Town (Map pp110–11; ☎ 021-421 4280; 4th fl, Broadway Industries Centre, Foreshore); Consulate in Jo'burg (Map pp398-9; ☎ 011-646 6900; 1 River St, Killarney); Consulate in Durban (Map pp306-7; ☎ 031-304 4737; 29th fl, Durban Bay House, 333 Smith St)

Zimbabwe High Commission in Pretoria (Map pp428–9; ☎ 012-342 5125; 798 Merton Ave, Arcadia); Consulate in Cape Town (Map pp110–11; ☎ 021-461 4710; 55 Kuyper St, Zonnebloem); Consulate in Jo'burg (Map p402; ☎ 011-838 2156; 17th fl, 20 Anderson St)

Embassies & Consulates in Lesotho

Canada (Map p556; ☎ 2231 4187, 2231 6435; www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/southafrica/; 5th fl, LNDC, Block D, Kingsway, Maseru)

France (Map p556; ☎ 2232 5722; alliancefrancaise@ilesotho.com; Alliance Française Bldg, cnr Kingsway & Pioneer Rd, Maseru)

Germany (Map p556; ☎ 2233 2292; germanembassypretoria@gonet.co.za; 70C Maluti Rd, Maseru West)

Ireland (Map p556; ☎ 2231 4068; lesotho@dfia.ie; Tonakholo Rd, Maseru West)

Netherlands (Map p556; ☎ 2231 2114; lancers-inn@ilesotho.com; c/o Lancer's Inn, Maseru)

South Africa (Map p556; ☎ 2231 5758; sahcmas@leo.co.ls; 10th fl, Lesotho Bank Towers, Kingsway, Maseru)

USA (Map p556; ☎ 2231 2666; http://maseru.usembassy.gov; 254 Kingsway, Maseru)

Embassies & Consulates in Swaziland

Mozambique (Map p579; ☎ 404 3700; Mountain Inn Rd, Mbabane)

South Africa (Map p579; ☎ 404 4651; sah@afrikaonline.co.sz; 2nd fl, the Mall, Plasmall St, Mbabane)

USA (Map p579; ☎ 404 6441/2; http://mbabane.usembassy.gov; 7th fl, Central Bank Bldg, Warner St, Mbabane)

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

South Africa hosts dozens of festivals, and there's always something going on somewhere in the country. A small sampling is listed here, including a few highlights from Lesotho and Swaziland. For other events, see the destination chapters. Good places to check on what's happening include www.safrika.info/plan_trip/holiday/culture_heritage/festivals.htm and www.festivals.co.za.

JANUARY

Cape Town New Year Carnival (Cape Town Minstrel Carnival) Cape Town's longest-running street party is held 1–2 January, with ribald song and dance parades, colourful costumes and general revelry. It's followed by a Jazzathon at the Waterfront.

FEBRUARY

Kavadi Festival The major Hindu festival, held twice annually (January–February and April–May) in Durban, in honour of the Hindu god Muruga. It's accompanied by the piercing of the body with skewers as a sign of devotion.

MARCH

Cape Argus Cycle Tour (www.cyclotour.co.za) Held in the second week of March, this spin around the Cape Peninsula is the largest bicycle race in the world, with over 30,000 entries.

Absa Klein Karoo National Arts Festival (☎ 044-203 8600; info@kknk.co.za) Enjoy all things Afrikaans at this festival that aims to seek unity between Afrikaans speakers of all races; held in Oudtshoorn (Western Cape) in late March/early April.

APRIL

Old Mutual Two Oceans Marathon (www.twooceansmarathon.org.za) One of the world's most beautiful marathon routes, held around the Cape Peninsula on Easter Saturday.

Rustler's Valley One World Unity Party (www.rustlers.co.za) An off-beat music-centred party held around Easter weekend that's an annual highlight for alternative lifestyle lovers of every sort. Rustler's Valley, Free State.

Splashy Fen Music Festival (www.splashyfen.co.za) Rock, pop and jazz with a fringe; held in late April at Splashy Fen Farm, about 20km north of Underberg in the foothills of the southern Drakensberg.

JUNE

Comrades Marathon (www.comrades.com) Held in mid-June, this 89km road race (queen of marathons) is run between Durban and Pietermaritzburg, alternating directions each year.

Durban International Film Festival (diff@ukzn.ac.za) A cinematic showcase for films from around the country and the continent; held in Durban.

JULY

National Arts Festival (www.nafest.co.za) Get in touch with South Africa's creative pulse at the country's largest arts festival, held annually in early July at Grahamstown (Eastern Cape).

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER

Umhlanga (Reed) Dance Swaziland's week-long debutante ball in August/September; young Swazi women journey to Lobamba to help repair the queen mother's home and then dance before the king.

OCTOBER

Morija Arts & Cultural Festival (www.morijafest.com) A celebration of Basotho culture; held in early October in Morija (Lesotho).

Standard Bank Awesome Africa Music Festival (www.awesomeafricafestival.co.za) Highlighting music and theatre groups from across the continent; held in Durban in early October.

NOVEMBER

Diwali The Durban Indian community's three-day Festival of Lights.

DECEMBER

Soweto Arts Festival (☎ 011 487 2818; www.joburg.org.za) A week-long festival to promote the arts, unity and culture. Held annually in mid- to late-December at various locales in Soweto.

Incwala The sacred rain and harvest festival of the Swazi, held in December/January, depending on the moon.

FOOD

Dining in South Africa is generally pleasurable and good value. Sit-down meals in restaurants (without getting into *haute cuisine*) average between R60 and R80 per person (less in pubs), and fresh produce everywhere is good value.

Restaurants are generally open daily from around 11.30am until 2.30pm or 3pm for lunch, and from about 6.30pm or 7pm until about 10pm for dinner. Cafés generally open from about 7.30am or 8am until about 5pm or 6pm. If there's a closing day, it's usually Sunday or Monday. Variations have been noted in individual listings.

For more on eating well in South Africa (and in Lesotho and Swaziland), see the Food & Drink chapter (p92).

GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELLERS

South Africa's constitution is one of the few in the world that explicitly prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, and there are active gay and lesbian communities and scenes in Cape Town, Jo'burg, Pretoria and Durban. Cape Town is without doubt the focal point, and the most openly gay city on the continent.

Things have come a long way since 1990, when Jo'burg hosted a gay pride parade, with many supporters wearing brown paper bags over their heads to conceal their identity. The parade, which is held annually in late September, is still going strong. There's also a separate annual gay and lesbian film festival, **Out in Africa** (www.oia.co.za), with a good selection of international and local films in Jo'burg, Pretoria and Cape Town. In December everyone fights for tickets for the popular **Mother City Queer Project party** (www.mcqp.co.za) in Cape Town.

Despite the liberality of the new constitution, it will be a while before the more

conservative sections of society begin to accept it. Outside the cities, in both black and white communities, homosexuality remains frowned upon, if not taboo.

The country's longest-running gay newspaper is the monthly **Exit** (www.exit.co.za). The glossy monthly *OUTright* is for gay males; *Womyn* is its lesbian equivalent. Both are available at CNA and other chain bookstores nationwide. The Gauteng-based magazine *Rush* is also worth looking out for; it's often available at gay venues. There's a gay and lesbian link on the South Africa tourism website (www.southafrica.net). Another good contact is Cape Town's **Triangle Project** (☎ 021-448 3812; www.triangle.org.za), which offers professional counselling, legal advice and education programmes, and is also a leading AIDS support organisation. Also see www.mask.org.za; and the boxed texts on p153 and p414.

Swaziland is much more conservative than South Africa. Both male homosexual and lesbian activities are officially illegal, and gay sexual relationships are culturally taboo. In Lesotho, there is no official prohibition of homosexual activity, though gay sexual relationships are taboo and open displays of affection – whatever your orientation – are frowned upon.

HOLIDAYS

Public Holidays

After the 1994 elections, public holidays underwent a dramatic shake-up. For example, the Day of the Vow, which celebrated the Boers' victory in the Battle of Blood River, has become the Day of Reconciliation. The officially ignored but widely observed Soweto Day, marking the Soweto uprisings, is now celebrated as Youth Day. Human Rights Day is held on the anniversary of the Sharpeville massacre (p41).

Current public holidays follow:

SOUTH AFRICA

New Year's Day 1 January
Human Rights Day 21 March
Good Friday March/April
Easter Sunday March/April
Easter Monday March/April
Family Day 17 April
Constitution or Freedom Day 27 April
Workers' Day 1 May
Youth Day 16 June

Women's Day 9 August
Heritage Day 24 September
Day of Reconciliation 16 December
Christmas Day 25 December
Day of Goodwill 26 December

LESOTHO

New Year's Day 1 January
Moshoeshoe Day 11 March
Good Friday March/April
Easter Monday March/April
Hero's Day 4 April
Workers' Day 1 May
Ascension Day May
King's Birthday 17 July
Independence Day 4 October
Christmas Day 25 December
Boxing Day 26 December

SWAZILAND

New Year's Day 1 January
Good Friday March/April
Easter Monday March/April
King Mswati III's Birthday 19 April
National Flag Day 25 April
King Sobhuza II's Birthday 22 July
Umlhanga (Reed) Dance August/September
Somhlolo Day 6 September (Independence)
Christmas Day 25 December
Boxing Day 26 December
Incwala Ceremony December/January (dates vary yearly)

School Holidays

South Africa's major holiday periods are the December–January school holidays as well as the Easter break. Many shops and businesses close, accommodation in national parks and tourist areas is fully booked and peak-season prices are in effect. At the beginning and end of these holiday periods, public transport fills up, as do seats on domestic and international flights, and you'll likely encounter long queues at popular border posts.

The situation is similar during other school holidays, but not as intense. During these times, accommodation prices are often increased, but not by as much.

The provinces stagger their school holidays. They are approximately late March to early April (varying, depending when Easter is); late June to mid-July; late September to early October; and early December to mid-January. For exact dates, see www.saschools.co.za/sas/calendar.htm. The

main school holiday periods in Lesotho and Swaziland parallel those in South Africa.

INSURANCE

Travel insurance covering theft, loss and medical problems is highly recommended. Before choosing a policy spend time shopping around, as those designed for short package tours in Europe may not be suitable for the South African veld. Also be sure to read the fine print, as some policies specifically exclude 'dangerous activities', which can mean scuba diving, motorcycling, bungee jumping and more. At a minimum, check that the policy covers emergency evacuation at least to Jo'burg and/or an emergency flight home. If you'll be in Lesotho and Swaziland, check to see whether the evacuation plan extends to these countries.

If your policy requires you to pay first and claim later for medical treatment, be sure to keep all documentation. Some policies ask you to call back (reverse charges) to a centre in your home country where an immediate assessment of your problem is made.

For information about vehicle insurance, see p637; for health insurance see p644.

Worldwide cover to travellers from over 44 countries is available online at www.lonelyplanet.com/travel_services.

INTERNET ACCESS

Internet access is widely available in South Africa. Many hostels offer email facilities, and there are Internet cafés in every major town. Costs average R10 to R30 per hour. If you're travelling with your own computer, hooking up in hotel rooms is straightforward, requiring only the phone connection jack for your modem. Most top hotels have wireless access and/or broadband (for which they should be able to provide the cable).

In Swaziland, there's Internet access in Mbabane, Manzini and in a few places in the Ezulwini and Malkerns Valleys; elsewhere in the country, connections are few and far between. In Lesotho, you can log on in Maseru.

LEGAL MATTERS

If you have the misfortune to be arrested in South Africa, you have the right to keep silent; the right to be released on bail or

warning, unless there's a good reason to keep you in jail; the right to a lawyer; and the right to food and decent conditions.

Apart from traffic offences such as speeding and drunk driving, the main area to watch out for is drug use and possession. Despite a relatively open drug culture, use and possession are illegal: arrests happen and penalties are stiff.

MAPS

Good country maps are widely available for all three countries, and a recommended investment if you'll be driving. Some to look for are Map Studio's *Tourist Map* (1:2,500,000) and the Automobile Association of South Africa (AASA) series of maps covering the country. Michelin maps also cover South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland. Lonely Planet's *Cape Town City Map* is useful whether you're visiting the city by car or on foot. All of these are readily available in map stores and bookstores in major cities in South Africa. A good place to look is **Map Studio** (www.mapstudio.co.za), with branches in Cape Town, Durban and Jo'burg. Many bookstores in the CNA chain also usually stock a good selection of road atlases.

For any hiking done away from established trails, a topographical map is highly recommended. Government maps are available from **Maps Unlimited** (☎ 011-882 1741; www.mapoffice.co.za; 10 Rembrandt Park Plaza, cnr Lister & Heine Rds, Rembrandt Park, Jo'burg). Drakensberg maps – essential if you plan on hiking there – are available from KwaZulu-Natal Nature Conservation (p85).

In Lesotho, 1:50,000 topographical maps are available from the Department of Land, Surveys & Physical Planning (p555). It also sells a good 1:250,000 country map (1994). The AASA puts out the helpful *Motoring in Lesotho*, available at the tourist information office and bookstores in Maseru.

In Swaziland, the tourist office hands out a free country map, with city plans for Mbabane and Manzini on the reverse, though none are particularly accurate. Better is the AASA's *Motoring in the Kingdom of Swaziland* map, which is on sale at the tourist information office in Mbabane, and at bookstores. Topographical maps (1:50,000) are available from the **Ministry of Public Works & Transport Surveyor General's office** (☎ 404 2321; Mhlambanyatsi Rd, Mbabane).

MONEY

South Africa's currency is the rand (R), which is divided into 100 cents. There is no black market. The coins are one, two, five, 10, 20 and 50 cents, and R1, R2 and R5. The notes are R10, R20, R50, R100 and R200. There have been forgeries of the R200 note and some businesses are reluctant to accept them.

In Lesotho, the currency is the loti (plural maloti, M), which is divided into 100 lisente. In Swaziland, it's the lilangeni (plural emalanganeni, E). Both the loti and the lilangeni are fixed at a value equal to the South African rand. Rand are accepted everywhere in both Lesotho and Swaziland, though you will invariably be given maloti or emalanganeni in change.

The value of the rand has fluctuated wildly in recent years, and is currently on the upswing, although South Africa is still less expensive than Europe and North America. For exchange rates, see the table inside the front cover. For information on costs, see p21.

The best currencies to bring are US dollars, euros or British pounds in a mixture of travellers cheques and cash, plus a Visa

or MasterCard for withdrawing money from ATMs.

ATMs

There are ATMs in all cities in South Africa, most of which give cash advances against cards belonging to the Cirrus network. For safety precautions, see below.

In Lesotho there is an ATM in Maseru that accepts international cards. All other ATMs in Lesotho only work if you have a local bank account.

In Swaziland, there are ATMs that accept international cards in Mbabane, the Ezulwini Valley and a few other locations around the country.

Credit Cards

These are widely accepted in South Africa, especially MasterCard and Visa, and can also be used at many ATMs for cash advances. Nedbank is an official Visa agent and Standard Bank is a MasterCard agent – both have branches across the country.

In Lesotho and Swaziland, credit cards are only accepted by the major tourist establishments.

BEATING THE ATM SCAMS

If you are a victim of crime in South Africa, it's most likely to occur at an ATM. There are dozens of scams that involve stealing your cash, your card or your personal identification number (PIN) – usually all three. Thieves are just as likely to operate in Stellenbosch as in downtown Jo'burg and they are almost always well-dressed and well-mannered men.

The ATM scam you're most likely to encounter involves the thief tampering with the machine so your card becomes jammed. By the time you realise this you've entered your PIN. The thief will have seen this, and when you go inside to report that your card has been swallowed, he will take the card and leave you several thousand rand shorter. We make no guarantees, but if you follow the rules listed here you stand a better chance of avoiding this and other scams.

- Avoid ATMs at night and in secluded places. Rows of machines in shopping malls are usually the safest.
- Most ATMs have security guards. If there's no guard around when you're withdrawing cash, watch your back, or get someone else to watch it for you.
- Watch the people using the ATM ahead of you carefully. If they look suspicious, go to another machine.
- Use ATMs during banking hours and if possible take a friend. If your card is jammed in a machine, one person can stay at the ATM while the other seeks assistance from the bank.
- When you put your card into the ATM press cancel immediately. If the card is returned then you know there is no blockage in the machine and it should be safe to proceed.
- Don't hesitate to be rude in refusing any offers of help to complete your transaction.
- If someone does offer, end your transaction immediately and find another machine.
- Carry your bank's emergency phone number and if you do lose your card report it immediately.

Moneychangers**SOUTH AFRICA**

Cash is readily exchanged at banks (First National, Nedbank and Standard Bank are usually the best) and foreign exchange bureaux in all major cities.

Most banks change travellers cheques in major currencies with varying commissions. Nedbank is associated with American Express, and First National Bank and Nedbank are associated with Visa. Thomas Cook has travellers cheques in rand, though it works out best in the end to buy US dollar cheques. If you do buy some rand cheques, do so just before departure to minimise the effects of devaluation.

The Thomas Cook agent in South Africa is Rennies Travel, a large chain of travel agencies, and there are American Express offices in major cities. Neither charges a commission for its own travellers cheques, though you'll usually get a higher rate of exchange from a bank. Rennies also changes other travellers cheques without fees.

Keep at least some of your exchange receipts as you'll need these to reconvert leftover rand when you leave.

LESOTHO

The only place where you can reliably exchange foreign cash and travellers cheques is in Maseru. Commissions average 2.5% on travellers cheques (minimum M25), and 1.25% on cash (minimum M40). Rand notes are usually available on request.

SWAZILAND

First National and Nedbank change cash and travellers cheques. Rates are similar at both, but commissions vary. Most banks ask to see the purchase receipt when cashing travellers cheques.

Standard Bank has branches in Mbabane, Manzini, Nhlalango, Piggs Peak, Simunye, Tshaneni, Matsapha and Big Bend. First National also has branches around the country, while Nedbank is in Mbabane, Manzini and Matsapha.

Taxes & Refunds**SOUTH AFRICA**

South Africa has a value-added tax (VAT) of 14%, but departing foreign visitors can reclaim much of this on goods being taken out of the country. To make a claim, the

goods must have been bought at a shop participating in the VAT foreign tourist sales scheme, their total value must exceed R250, and you will need a tax invoice for each item. This is usually the receipt, but must include the following:

- the words 'tax invoice'
- the seller's VAT registration number
- the seller's name and address
- a description of the goods purchased
- the cost of the goods and the amount of VAT charged, or a statement that VAT is included in the total cost of the goods
- a tax invoice number
- the date of the transaction.

For purchases over R500, your name and address and the quantity of goods must also appear on the invoice. All invoices must be originals – no photocopies.

At your point of departure, you'll need to fill in a form or two and show the goods to a customs inspector. At airports, make sure you have goods checked by the inspector before you check in your luggage. After going through immigration, make the claim and pick up your refund cheque; at some airports you can cash it immediately at a bank (in any major currency). If your claim comes to more than R3000, a cheque will be mailed to your home address. There's an efficient system in place in the Cape Town Tourism offices, and those of other major cities, enabling you to process the paperwork beforehand. It's also possible to arrange for a refund to your credit card.

You can claim at the international airports in Jo'burg, Cape Town and Durban, and at the following local airports: Bloemfontein, Gateway, Lanseria, Mmabatho, Mpumalanga Kruger (Nelspruit), Port Elizabeth and Upington. It's also possible to claim at the Beitbridge (Zimbabwe) and Komatipoort (Mozambique) border crossings and at major harbours.

LESOTHO & SWAZILAND

Both Lesotho and Swaziland have a VAT of 14%, applied similarly to that in South Africa although there are not yet any systems for refunds in place. In both countries, many hotels omit the tax when quoting rates, although we've included it in the listings in this book.

Tipping

Wages are low, and tipping is expected; around 10% to 15% is usual in tourist areas. The main exceptions are in rural parts of Lesotho and Swaziland, where it's generally the custom to simply round up the bill.

PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEO

In South Africa, film (slide and print), cameras and accessories are readily available in large towns, and processing, including slide processing, is generally of a high standard. Blank video tapes are available in major cities, although they won't work on North American machines. Film selection is much more limited in Lesotho and Swaziland, with a modest selection of print film available in major towns.

For wildlife photos, a good lightweight 35mm single lens reflex (SLR) automatic camera with a lens between 210mm and 300mm should do the trick. Video cameras with zoom facility may be able to get closer and digital cameras will perform all sorts of magic. An early start to the day is advisable as most wildlife is active during the cooler hours.

When photographing animals, take light readings on the subject to avoid underexposure. The first two hours after sunrise and the last two before sunset are the best times of day to take photos on sunny days. In Lesotho and Swaziland, you can often capture some excellent special effects with the sunlight just after a summer storm.

In all three countries, be careful about taking photos of soldiers, police, airports, defence installations and government buildings. It goes without saying that you should always ask permission before taking a photo of anyone, but particularly so if you're in a tribal village.

Lonely Planet's *Travel Photography: A Guide to Taking Better Pictures* by Richard I'Anson will help you do exactly what the title says.

POST

Post offices are open from 8.30am to 4.30pm Monday to Friday, and 8am to noon Saturday. In South Africa and Swaziland, both domestic and international deliveries are generally reliable, but can be slow. In Lesotho, delivery is slow and unreliable. For mailing anything of value consider using one

of the private mail services, such as Postnet. Poste restante is available in all major cities in South Africa, in Maseru in Lesotho, and in Manzini and Mbabane in Swaziland.

SHOPPING

South Africa

Handicrafts of varying quality are sold everywhere – though more expensively here than in Lesotho and Swaziland. Most carvings of animals and people are not traditional, although some are still quite attractive. Items to watch for include Venda pottery and woodcarvings, and Zulu beadwork and basketry. Township-produced crafts, such as wirework, also make great gifts, and are inexpensive and light to carry.

Western consumer goods are readily available in major towns and cities, where you'll invariably find department stores and shopping malls.

Lesotho

The famous Lesotho blanket – the country's all-purpose garment – is usually made outside Lesotho. However some local production remains, and these colourful wool and mohair textiles have been transformed into an art form in the internationally acclaimed wall hangings produced by Moteng weavers.

Other handicrafts include mohair tapestry, and woven-grass products such as mats, baskets and the ubiquitous Basotho hat. Trekking sticks come plain or decorated and can be found everywhere.

Swaziland

Because of the strength of Swaziland's traditional culture, many items here are made for the local market as much as for tourists. Popular items include woven grassware such as *liqhaga* ('bottles' that are so tightly woven that they are used for carrying water) and mats; and wooden items, ranging from bowls to *knobkerries* (traditional Southern African weapons/sticks). Swazi candles – works of art in wax – are also well worth seeking out. Good places to look for crafts include Malkerns, Mbabane and the Ezulwini Valley.

Bargaining

With the exception of the occasional curio stand, bargaining isn't expected in South

Africa. In Lesotho and Swaziland, you'll find a mix of fixed-price shops, and curio stands where the vendors are willing to bargain.

SOLO TRAVELLERS

Solo travel in South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland – whether you're male or female – is straightforward. While you may be a minor curiosity in rural areas, especially solo women travellers, it's likely that in most places nobody will even bat an eye.

Times when you'd likely want to find a group to join up with would be for a safari (to cut costs), on hiking trails (many in South Africa have a three-person minimum for safety reasons), and at night. Especially in urban areas and at night, women travelling alone should use caution, and avoid isolating situations. See also p620.

TELEPHONE

South Africa

South Africa has good telephone facilities, which will likely become better and more competitively priced once an already-approved second national operator (SNO Telecommunications) becomes operational and breaks up Telkom SA's long-held monopoly.

Local calls are relatively inexpensive (about R1 for three minutes), whereas domestic long-distance calls (from about R2 per minute) and international calls (from R7 per minute to Europe) can be pricey. Phonecards are widely available. There are also private phone centres where you can pay cash for your call, but at double the rate of public phones. International calls are cheaper after 8pm on weekdays, and between 8pm Friday and 8am Monday. For reverse-charge calls, dial ☎ 0900.

A good way to avoid high charges when calling home, or to make reverse-charge calls, is to dial your 'Country Direct' number, which puts you through to an operator in your country. Some major Country Direct numbers:

Australia Direct (☎ 0800 990 061)

Belgium Direct (☎ 0800 990 032)

Canada Direct (☎ 0800 990 014)

Denmark Direct (☎ 0800 990 045)

Ireland Direct (☎ 0800 990 353)

Japan Direct (☎ 0800 990 081)

Netherlands Direct (☎ 0800 990 031)

New Zealand Direct (☎ 0800 990 064)

UK Direct – BT (☎ 0800 990 044)

UK Direct – Call UK (☎ 0800 990 544)

USA Direct – AT&T (☎ 0800 990 123)

USA Direct – MCI Call US (☎ 0800 990 011)

USA Direct – Sprint Express (☎ 0800 990 001)

PHONE CODES

South Africa's country code is ☎ 27. To make an international call from South Africa (including to Lesotho and Swaziland), dial ☎ 09, followed by the country code, local area code (without the initial zero) and telephone number.

Telephone numbers in South Africa are 10 digits, including the local area code, which must always be dialled, unless you are in the same town. South African area codes are given at the start of each section, or with the telephone number. There are also several four-digit nationwide prefixes (for use within South Africa only) followed by six-digit numbers. These prefixes include: ☎ 0800 (toll free), ☎ 0860 (charged as a local call), and ☎ 0861 (flat-rate calls).

MOBILE PHONES

The mobile-phone network covers most of the country, and mobile-phone ownership is widespread. The network operates on the GSM digital system, which you'll need to know if you're thinking of bringing your phone from home.

The three major mobile networks are **Vodacom** (www.vodacom.co.za), **MTN** (www.mtn.co.za) and **Cell C** (www.cellc.co.za). Hiring a mobile phone is relatively inexpensive, but call charges average about R3 per minute. Some car-rental firms offer deals on mobile phones. An easy alternative is to use your own phone (check ahead that it's compatible), and insert a local prepaid or pay-as-you-go SIM card from one of the three mobile networks. These cards are available almost everywhere at shopping malls and shops in all larger cities and towns.

The main codes for mobile phones are: ☎ 082 (Vodacom), ☎ 083 (MTN) and ☎ 084 (Cell C).

Lesotho

Lesotho's telephone system works reasonably well, although you don't have to go far off the beaten track to be away from the telephone system altogether.

The country code is ☎ 266; there are no area codes. To make international calls, including to South Africa, dial ☎ 00, followed by the country code, area code (minus the initial zero) and telephone number. For international reverse charge calls dial ☎ 109.

The main mobile phone service is provided by **Vodacom Lesotho** (www.vodacom.co.ls), based in Maseru. The coverage area extends north to Butha-Buthe, south to Quthing (Moyeni) and east to Mohale Dam. Charges are similar to those in South Africa.

Swaziland

Swaziland also has a reasonably good telephone network. The country code is ☎ 268; there are no area codes. To make international calls, including to South Africa, dial ☎ 00 for international, then the country code and city code. Dial ☎ 94 to make a reverse-charge call.

International calls are expensive, and most easily made using phonecards. You can also make international calls (but not reverse-charge calls) at the Mbabane post office. Outside of major towns, it's necessary to book international calls through an operator (☎ 94).

Mobile-phone services are provided by both **MTN** (www.mtn.co.sz) and **Vodacom** (www.vodacom.co.za).

TIME

South African Standard Time is two hours ahead of GMT/UTC, seven hours ahead of USA Eastern Standard Time, and eight hours behind Australian Eastern Standard Time. At noon in Jo'burg, it's 10am in London, 5am in New York, and 8pm in Sydney. There is no daylight-saving time. Lesotho and Swaziland are in the same time zone as South Africa.

This is a wide region to be covered by one time zone and the sun rises and sets noticeably earlier in Durban than it does in Cape Town. Most timetables and businesses use the 24-hour clock.

TOILETS

Finding a clean, Western-style toilet in South Africa is usually not a problem. There are few public toilets, but tourist information offices and restaurants are often willing to give you a key to their facilities.

In rural areas, and anywhere outside of major towns in Swaziland and Lesotho, long-drops (holes in the ground, sometimes with footrests or makeshift seats) are the norm.

TOURIST INFORMATION

South Africa

The main government tourism organisation is **South African Tourism** (☎ 011-895 3000, 083-123 6789; www.southafrica.net), which has a helpful website with news of upcoming events and various links.

For more details on individual provinces, there are provincial tourism organisations, of varying quality. In addition to these, almost every town in the country has at least one tourist office. These are private entities, and rely on commissions (5% is usually built into their hotel rates) for their existence. Also, be aware that many tourist offices will only recommend the services of member organisations (ie those that have paid up). You may well have to push to find out about all the possible options, especially cheaper accommodation.

Provincial tourist offices include the following:

Eastern Cape Tourism Board (☎ 043-701 9600; www.ectb.co.za)

Free State Tourism Board (☎ 051-447 1362; www.dteea.fs.gov.za)

Gauteng Tourism Authority (☎ 011-832 2780; www.gauteng.net)

KwaZulu-Natal Tourism Authority (☎ 031-366 7500; www.kzn.org.za)

Limpopo Tourism Board (☎ 015-295 8262, 0860-730 730; www.golimpopo.com)

Mpumalanga Tourism Authority (☎ 013-752 7001; www.mpumalanga.com)

North-West Province Parks & Tourism Board (☎ 018-397 1500, 293 1611; www.tourismnorthwest.co.za)

Northern Cape Tourism Authority (☎ 053-832 2657; www.northerncape.org.za)

Western Cape Tourism Board (☎ 021-426 5639; www.tourismcapetown.co.za)

TOURIST OFFICES ABROAD

South African Tourism offices abroad include the following:

Australia (☎ 02-9261 5000; info@southafrica.net; Level 1, 117 York St, Sydney, NSW 2000)

France (☎ 01 45 61 01 97; info.fr@southafrica.net; 61 Rue La Boétie, 75008 Paris)

Germany (☎ 069-280 950; info.de@southafrica.net; Friedenstrasse 6-10, D-60311 Frankfurt)

Japan (☎ 03-3478 7601; info@southafrican-tourism.or.jp; Akasaka Lions Bldg, 1-1-2 Moto Akasaka, Minato-ku, Tokyo 107-0051)

UK (☎ 020-8971 9350; info.uk@southafrica.net; 6 Alt Grove, Wimbledon, London SW19 4DZ)

USA (☎ 212-730 2929; newyork@southafrica.net; 20th fl, 500 Fifth Ave, New York, NY 10110)

Lesotho & Swaziland

The helpful **Tourist Information Office** (☎ 2231 2427; Kingsway) in Maseru (see p555) has information on all major tourist areas, plus maps and transport tips. For more general information, check the tourism page on the **Lesotho government website** (www.lesotho.gov.ls).

Swaziland's main **tourist information office** (☎ 404 2531; www.welcometoswaziland.com; Swazi Plaza) is in Mbabane. Also check www.min-tour.gov.sz.

TRAVELLERS WITH DISABILITIES

South Africa is one of the best destinations on the continent for disabled travellers, with an ever-expanding network of facilities catering to those who are mobility impaired or blind. **SAN Parks** (☎ 012-428 9111; www.sanparks.org) has an excellent and inspirational overview of accommodation and trail accessibility for the mobility impaired at all its parks, with particular detail on Kruger, and is the best travel website we have seen anywhere in terms of incorporating disabled access information throughout its pages.

Wheelchairs are sometimes available for visitors at several botanical gardens, including Kirstenbosch (Cape Town), though you should call in advance to confirm. Kirstenbosch and several nature reserves also have Braille or guided trails for the visually impaired. Also of note are the wonderful penguin boardwalk at Table Mountain National Park (p107), and the discovery trail and horse riding possibilities at Addo Elephant National Park (p255). Other destinations with facilities for the disabled have been noted throughout the book.

Hand-controlled vehicles can be hired at Avis (p636) and other major car rental agencies (see p636) in major cities, and (through Avis) at Kruger Park's Skukuza Camp.

A helpful initial contact is the **National Council for Persons with Physical Disabilities in**

South Africa (☎ 011-726 8040; www.ncppdsa.co.za).

Other useful sources of information:

Access-Able Travel Source (www.access-able.com) Has lists of operators offering tours for travellers with disabilities.

Carpe Diem Tours (☎ /fax 027-217 1125) Specialises in tours for the physically challenged and the elderly in Western and Northern Capes.

Central Reservations (www.centralres.co.za/disabled.html) A small listing of disabled-friendly accommodation.

Eco-Access (www.eco-access.org) An overview of disabled-related initiatives in South Africa.

Epic-Enabled (www.epic-enabled.com) Can help arrange tours, plus Kruger safaris.

Flamingo Tours (www.flamingotours.co.za) Tours for the disabled in Western and Eastern Cape, Kruger and elsewhere in South Africa.

Linx Africa (www.linx.co.za/trails/lists/disalist.html) For province-by-province listings of disabled-friendly trails.

Rolling SA (www.rollingsa.co.za) Tours and Kruger safaris.

VISAS

South Africa

Visitors on holiday from most Commonwealth countries (including Australia and the UK), most Western European countries, Japan and the USA don't require visas. Instead, you'll be issued with a free entry permit on arrival. These are valid for a stay of up to 90 days. However, if the date of your flight out is sooner than this, the immigration officer will use it as the date of your permit expiry unless you specifically request otherwise.

If you aren't entitled to an entry permit, you'll need to get a visa (also free) before you arrive. These aren't issued at the borders, and must be obtained at a South African embassy or consulate. Allow up to several weeks for processing. South Africa has consular representation in most countries, with a partial listing given on p609. The website of the South African High Commission in London (www.southafricahouse.com) has an overview of visa requirements, and lists the nationalities that require visas.

If you do need a visa (rather than an entry permit), get a multiple-entry visa if you plan to make a foray into Lesotho, Swaziland or any other neighbouring country. This avoids the hassle of applying for another South African visa in a small town such as Maseru or Mbabane.

For any entry – whether you require a visa or not – you need to have at least two

completely blank pages in your passport, excluding the last two pages.

VISA EXTENSIONS

Applications for visa or entry-permit extensions, and for re-entry visas, should be made at the **Department of Home Affairs** (<http://home-affairs.pwv.gov.za>). There are branches in Cape Town (p106), Durban, Jo'burg and Pretoria.

Lesotho

Citizens of most Western European countries, Japan, Israel, the USA and most Commonwealth countries are granted a free entry permit at the border. The standard permitted stay is two weeks, although if you ask for longer it's often granted. For a lengthier stay, you'll need to apply in advance to the **Director of Immigration & Passport Services** (☎ 2232 3771, 2232 1110; PO Box 363, Maseru 100).

Travellers who require visas can get these in South Africa (see Embassies & Consulates, p609). You'll need one passport photo and about R30/50 for single/multiple entry; processing takes 24 hours. If you arrive at the Maseru Bridge border crossing without a visa, with some luck you'll be issued a temporary entry permit to allow you to get into Maseru, where you can apply for a visa at the Ministry of Immigration. However, don't count on this, as it depends completely on the whim of the border officials.

Swaziland

Most people don't need a visa to visit Swaziland. For those who do (including citizens of Austria and Switzerland), they are available free of charge at border posts and at the airport. In South Africa, you can get them in Pretoria and Jo'burg (see p609). In countries without Swazi diplomatic representation, contact the UK representative.

Anyone staying for more than 60 days must apply for a temporary residence permit from the **Chief Immigration Officer** (☎ 404 2941; PO Box 372, Mbabane).

Visas for Neighbouring Countries

Visas for Namibia are not issued at the border, though many nationalities don't require one. Visas for Zimbabwe and Mozambique are available at the borders. (South African nationals don't need a visa

for Mozambique.) For Mozambique it's cheaper to arrange your visa in advance at the Mozambican High Commission in Mbabane, or in Nelspruit. Both issue express visas in 24 hours.

If you'll be arranging your visa in advance: Zimbabwean visas take at least a week to issue in South Africa; those for Namibia take two to three days; and those for Botswana take between four and 14 days. Non-express Mozambique visas take one week.

VOLUNTEERING

Volunteer work is possible, especially if you're interested in teaching or wildlife conservation. A good initial contact is **Volunteer Abroad** (www.volunteerabroad.com), with extensive listings of volunteer opportunities in the country.

Unless you have a UK passport, anyone coming to South Africa to do volunteer work needs to get a work permit. Applications for these should be made through the South African embassy or consulate in your home country; processing usually takes one month.

WOMEN TRAVELLERS Attitudes Towards Women

Sexism is a common attitude among South African men, regardless of colour. Modern ideas such as equality of the sexes have not filtered through to many people, especially away from the cities. Women are usually called 'ladies' unless they play sport, in which case they are called 'girls'.

Fortunately times are changing and nowadays there are plenty of women who don't

put up with this, but South African society as a whole is still decades behind most developed countries. Also, ironically, there has been something of an antifeminist backlash without there having been many feminist gains in the first place. The fact that black women were at the forefront in the liberation struggle and that many of these women have entered politics may change this, however.

Not surprisingly, there are big differences between the lives of women in the region's various cultures. In traditional black cultures, women often have a very tough time, but this is changing to some extent because a surprising number of young girls have the opportunity to stay at school while the boys are sent away to work. In South Africa's white communities, however, the number of girls finishing secondary school is significantly lower than the number of boys, which goes against international trends.

The practice of female genital mutilation (female circumcision) is not part of the traditional cultures of South Africa (or Lesotho or Swaziland).

There's a very high level of sexual assault and other violence against women in South Africa, the majority of which occurs in townships and rural areas. Given the extremely high levels of HIV/AIDS in the country, the problem is compounded through the transfer of infection.

A large part of the problem in South Africa is the leniency of the judicial system that repeatedly lets perpetrators of sex offences off with short sentences. This, particularly in recent times, has had women's groups around the country voicing their concerns and demanding that the government step in and take tougher action.

There have been incidents of travellers being raped, but these cases are isolated, and cause outrage in local communities. For most female visitors, paternalistic attitudes are the main problem rather than physical assault.

Safety Precautions

Single female travellers have a curiosity value that makes them conspicuous, but it may also bring forth generous offers of assistance and hospitality. It is always difficult to quantify the risk of assault – and there is such a risk – but plenty of women do travel alone safely in South Africa.

Obviously the risk varies depending on where you go and what you do. Hitchhiking alone is extremely foolhardy. What risks there are, however, are significantly reduced if two women travel together or, even better, if a woman travels as part of a mixed-sex couple or group. But while the days of apartheid have long gone, a mixed-race couple will almost certainly attract attention and receive some antagonistic reactions – old attitudes die hard.

However you travel, especially inland and in the more traditional black communities, it's best to behave conservatively. On the coast, casual dress is the norm, but elsewhere dress modestly (full-length clothes that aren't too tight) if you do not wish to draw attention to yourself. Don't go out alone in the evenings on foot – always take a taxi; avoid isolated areas, roadways and beaches during both day and evening hours; avoid hiking alone; and carry a mobile phone if you'll be driving alone.

Although urban attitudes are more liberal, common sense and caution, particularly at night, are essential.

WORK

Unemployment is high in South Africa, and finding work is difficult. There are tough penalties for employers taking on foreigners without work permits, although this doesn't seem to have stopped foreigners getting jobs in restaurants or bars in tourist areas. If you do line something up, you can usually earn from around R25 per hour plus tips (which can be good). The best time to look for work is from October to November, before the high season starts, and before university students begin holidays.

COMING OF AGE

- The legal age for voting in South Africa (and in Lesotho and Swaziland) is 18.
- Driving is legal once you're 18.
- The legal drinking age is 18.
- Heterosexual sex is legal when you turn 16 (18 in Swaziland). In Lesotho the age of consent is 14 for boys and 16 for girls.
- The homosexual age of consent is 19 in South Africa, and undefined in Lesotho and Swaziland.

Transport

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GETTING THERE & AWAY

Flights, tours and rail tickets can be booked online through www.lonelyplanet.com/travel_services.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Passports

As long as you have complied with visa and entry-permit requirements (see p619), there are no restrictions on any nationalities for entering South Africa, Lesotho or Swaziland.

Entering South Africa

Once you have an entry permit or visa, South Africa is straightforward and hassle-free to enter. Travellers arriving by air are often required to show an onward ticket – preferably an air ticket, though an overland ticket also seems to be acceptable. On arrival you may have to satisfy immigration officials that you have sufficient funds for your stay, so it pays to be neat, clean and polite.

If you're coming to South Africa after travelling through the yellow-fever zone in Africa (which includes most of East, West

and Central Africa) or South America, you must have an international vaccination certificate against yellow fever. No other vaccinations are mandatory, although there are some you should consider (see p644).

Entering Lesotho

Almost everyone enters Lesotho overland from South Africa, although it's also possible to fly from Johannesburg (Jo'burg). Entry permits are easy to get at any of Lesotho's borders and at the airport. If you are a citizen of a country for which a visa is required (see p620), it's best to arrange this in advance. Vaccination certificate requirements are the same as those for South Africa.

Entering Swaziland

Most travellers enter Swaziland overland, although it's also possible to fly in from South Africa and Mozambique. Entry is usually hassle-free. Visas are readily available at the border for those nationalities that require one (see p620), although you'll save yourself queuing time by arranging the visa in advance. Vaccination-certificate requirements are the same as for South Africa.

AIR

Airports & Airlines

The major air hub for South Africa, and for the entire surrounding region, is **Johannesburg International Airport** (JIA or JNB; ☎ 011-921 6262; www.worldairportguides.com/johannesburg-jnb). It has a full range of shops, restaurants,

Internet access, ATMs, foreign-exchange bureaux and mobile-phone and car rental outlets.

Cape Town International Airport (CPT; ☎ 021-937 1200; www.airports.co.za) receives numerous direct flights from Europe, and is becoming an increasingly important gateway. It has a forex bureau, and mobile-phone rental and car-rental outlets.

The smaller **Durban International Airport** (DUR; ☎ 031-451 6758; www.airports.co.za) handles several regional flights, as does **Mpumalanga Kruger International Airport** (MQP; ☎ 013-753 7500; www.kmiairport.co.za) near Nelspruit and Kruger National Park.

Lesotho's **Moshoeshe International Airport** (MSU; ☎ 2235 0777), 21km southeast of Maseru, and Swaziland's **Matsapha International Airport** (MTS; ☎ 518 6840), 8km west of Manzini, handle regional flights only.

South African Airways (SAA; airline code SA; ☎ 0861-359 722, 011-978 5313; www.flysaa.com; hub JIA) is the national airline, with an excellent route network and safety record. In addition to its international routes, it operates regional flights together with its subsidiaries **South African Airlink** (SAAirlink; ☎ 011-978 5313; www.saaairlink.co.za) and **South African Express** (☎ 011-978 5577; www.saeexpress.co.za).

Some other international carriers flying to/from Jo'burg (except as noted):

Air France (AF; ☎ 0860-340 340; www.airfrance.fr)
Hub: Charles de Gaulle Airport, Paris.

Air Mauritius (MK; www.airmauritius.com) Jo'burg (☎ 011-444 4600); Cape Town (☎ 021-671 5225)
Hub: SSR Airport, Mauritius. Also serves Cape Town.

Air Namibia (SW; www.airnamibia.com.na) Jo'burg (☎ 011-390 2876); Cape Town (☎ 021-936 2755)
Hub: Chief Hosea Kutako Airport, Windhoek. Also serves Cape Town.

British Airways (BA; www.britishairways.com) Jo'burg (☎ 011-441 8600); Cape Town (☎ 021-936 9000)
Hub: Heathrow Airport, London. Also serves Cape Town.

Cathay Pacific (CX; ☎ 011-700 8900; www.cathaypacific.com) Hub: Hong Kong International Airport.

Comair (MN; ☎ 0860-435 922, 011-921 0222; www.comair.co.za) Hub: JIA. Operates British Airways flights within Africa.

Egyptair (MS; ☎ 011-390 2202, 011-880 4126/9; www.egyptair.com.eg) Hub: Cairo International Airport.

Emirates Airlines (EK; ☎ 011-883 8420; www.emirates.com) Hub: Dubai International Airport.

Kenya Airways (KQ; ☎ 011-881 9795, 011-571 8817; www.kenya-airways.com) Hub: Jomo Kenyatta International Airport, Nairobi.

DEPARTURE TAX

Airport departure tax is included in ticket prices in South Africa. Departure tax in Lesotho is M20, and in Swaziland it's E20. On flights from Swaziland into South Africa, there is an additional tax of R120.

KLM (KL; ☎ 0860-247 474, 011-881 9696; www.klm.com) Hub: Schiphol Airport, Amsterdam. Also serves Cape Town.

LTU International Airways (LT; ☎ 021-936 1190; www.ltu.de) Hub: Düsseldorf Airport. Flights to Cape Town only.

Lufthansa (LH; ☎ 0861-842 538, 021-415 3506; www.lufthansa.com) Hub: Frankfurt International Airport. Also serves Cape Town.

Malaysia Airlines (MH; www.malaysiaairlines.com) Jo'burg (☎ 011-880 9614); Cape Town (☎ 021-419 8010)
Hub: Kuala Lumpur. Also flies to Cape Town.

Qantas (QF; ☎ 011-441 8550; www.qantas.com.au)
Hub: Kingsford Smith Airport, Sydney.

Singapore Airlines (SQ; www.singaporeair.com) Jo'burg (☎ 011-880 8560); Cape Town (☎ 021-674 0601)
Hub: Singapore Changi Airport. Also serves Cape Town.

Swiss International Airlines (LX; ☎ 0860 040 506; www.swiss.com) Hub: Kloten Airport, Zurich.

Virgin Atlantic (VS; ☎ 011-340 3400; www.virgin-atlantic.com) Hub: London. Also serves Cape Town.

SAAirlink is the only commercial carrier currently flying into Lesotho. **Swazi Express Airways** (☎ 518 6840; www.swaziexpress.com) and **Swaziland Airlink** (☎ 518 6155; www.saaairlink.co.za), both based at Matsapha International Airport, are the main regional carriers servicing Swaziland. Swaziland Airlink – a joint venture between the Swazi government and SAAirlink in South Africa – has replaced Royal Swazi Airways as the national carrier.

Tickets

South Africa is served by various European carriers, as well as by direct flights from Australasia and North America. Fares from Europe and North America are usually highest in December and January, and again between July and September. They're lowest in April and May (except for the Easter holiday period) and in November. The rest of the year falls into the shoulder-season category, although it's worth hunting for special deals at any time. London is the main hub for discounted fares. It's often

THINGS CHANGE

The information in this chapter is particularly vulnerable to change. Check directly with the airline or a travel agent to make sure you understand how a fare (and ticket you may buy) works, and be aware of the security requirements for international travel. Shop carefully. The details given in this chapter should be regarded as pointers and are not a substitute for your own careful, up-to-date research.

CLIMATE CHANGE & TRAVEL

Climate change is a serious threat to the ecosystems that humans rely upon, and air travel is the fastest-growing contributor to the problem. Lonely Planet regards travel, overall, as a global benefit, but believes we all have a responsibility to limit our personal impact on global warming.

Flying & Climate Change

Pretty much every form of motorised travel generates CO₂ (the main cause of human-induced climate change) but planes are far and away the worst offenders, not just because of the sheer distances they allow us to travel, but because they release greenhouse gases high into the atmosphere. The statistics are frightening: two people taking a return flight between Europe and the USA will contribute as much to climate change as an average household's gas and electricity consumption over a whole year.

Carbon-Offset Schemes

Climatecare.org and other websites use 'carbon calculators' that allow travellers to offset the level of greenhouse gases they are responsible for with financial contributions to sustainable-travel schemes that reduce global warming – including projects in India, Honduras, Kazakhstan and Uganda.

Lonely Planet, together with Rough Guides and other concerned partners in the travel industry, support the carbon-offset scheme run by climatecare.org. Lonely Planet offsets all of its staff and author travel.

For more information check out our website: www.lonelyplanet.com.

slightly cheaper to fly into Jo'burg, than directly to Cape Town. Note that fares quoted in this book for international and domestic flights are full-fare economy. Always ask about seasonal and advance-purchase discounts, and other special rates, and always check the airline websites for online deals. Useful online ticket sellers include the following:

Cheap Tickets (www.cheaptickets.com)

Cheapflights (www.cheapflights.co.uk)

Expedia (www.expedia.co.uk, www.expedia.ca)

Flight Centre (www.flightcentre.com)

Flights.com (www.flights.com)

LowestFare.com (www.lowestfare.com)

OneTravel.com (www.onetravel.com)

Orbitz (www.orbitz.com)

STA Travel (www.statravel.com)

Travel.com.au (www.travel.com.au) Bookings from Australia.

Travel Jungle (www.traveljungle.co.uk)

Travelocity (www.travelocity.com)

COURIER FLIGHTS

Courier fares can be an inexpensive way of getting to South Africa, although you may have to surrender all your baggage allowance, take only carry-on luggage, and have limited or no flexibility with flight dates and times. Most courier flights are

into Jo'burg, with some into Cape Town. The **Air Courier Association** (www.aircourier.org) is a good place to start looking; you'll need to pay a modest membership fee to access its fares. Be aware that many of the advertised courier fares are for one way only.

INTERCONTINENTAL (ROUND-THE-WORLD) TICKETS

Round-the-world (RTW) tickets give you a limited period (usually a year) to circumnavigate the globe. You can go anywhere that the carrying airline and its partners go, as long as you stay within the set mileage or number of stops, and don't backtrack. RTW tickets that include Jo'burg or Cape Town start at around UK£1500 from the UK (about A\$3000 from Australia). While it's possible to include both Jo'burg and Cape Town on a RTW itinerary, this usually means flying into one city and out of the other. In between the two cities you'll need to travel overland or arrange a domestic flight.

Travel agents can also put together 'alternative' RTW tickets, which are more expensive, but more flexible, than standard RTW itineraries. If you want a multiple-stop itinerary without the cost of a RTW ticket, consider combining tickets from two low-cost airlines.

Some online RTW ticket sellers:

Airbrokers (www.airbrokers.com) For travel originating in North America.

Airtreks (www.airtreks.com) For travel originating in Canada or the USA.

Oneworld (www.oneworld.com) An airline alliance offering RTW packages.

Roundtheworldflights.com (www.roundtheworldflights.com) For travel originating in the UK.

Star Alliance (www.staralliance.com) An airline alliance offering RTW packages.

From Africa

There are good connections between Jo'burg and most major African cities on SAA and on regional airlines.

Antananarivo, Madagascar Air Madagascar (www.airmadagascar.mg) Connections to Mauritius and Réunion.

Bulawayo, Zimbabwe Air Zimbabwe (www.airzim.co.zw)

Dar es Salaam, Tanzania SAA (www.flysaa.com);

Kenya Airways (www.kenya-airways.com)

Gaborone, Botswana Air Botswana (www.airbotswana.co.bw)

Harare, Zimbabwe Air Zimbabwe; Comair (www.comair.co.za); Kulula.com (www.kulula.com)

Lagos, Nigeria SAA

Lusaka, Zambia Kulula.com; SAA

Maputo, Mozambique SAA; Linhas Aéreas de Moçambique (www.lam.com.mz)

Mauritius Air Mauritius (www.airmauritius.com)

Nairobi, Kenya SAA; Kenya Airways

Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe side Air Zimbabwe; Comair

Vilankulo, Mozambique Pelican Air Services (www.pelicanair.co.za) Some flights via Mpumalanga Kruger International Airport, and all with connections to Mozambique's Bazaruto Archipelago.

Windhoek, Namibia Comair; Kulula.com; Air Namibia (www.airnamibia.com.na) Air Namibia also has direct flights between Windhoek and Cape Town.

Also check with **1time** (www.1time.co.za), which is planning to start some regional flights. Most intra-African flights have set pricing, with little of the competition-driven discounting that you'll find in other parts of the world. However, there are sometimes good deals available. For round-trip fares, always ask about excursion rates and student discounts. Discounters include **Rennies Travel** (www.renniestravel.com) and **STA Travel** (www.statravel.co.za). Both have offices throughout Southern Africa. **Flight Centre** (0860 400 727, 011-778 1720; www.flightcentre.co.za) has offices in Jo'burg, Cape Town and several other cities.

The only commercial flight to/from Lesotho is SAAirlink's three-times daily run between Jo'burg and Moshoeshe airport (one hour).

Swaziland Airlink, a division of SAAirlink, flies three times daily between Matsapha and Jo'burg (one hour). Swazi Express flights link Swaziland's Matsapha airport with Durban (one hour), with connections on to Maputo and Vilankulo in Mozambique.

From Asia

You can fly to Jo'burg direct from Singapore (10½ hours, Singapore Airlines), Hong Kong (13 hours, Cathay Pacific) and Kuala Lumpur (10½ hours, Malaysia Airlines). It's also possible to connect from Asia (Singapore, Hong Kong and Mumbai) to Mauritius on Air Mauritius, and then from there to Jo'burg (four hours between Mauritius and Jo'burg). Singapore, Hong Kong and Bangkok are the best places to shop for discount tickets. Some useful ticket discounters:

Four Seas Tours ([☎ 2200 7760](http://2200 7760); www.fourseastravel.com/English) Hong Kong.

No 1 Travel ([☎ 03 3205 6073](http://03 3205 6073); www.no1-travel.com) Japan.

STA Travel Bangkok ([☎ 02-236 0262](http://02-236 0262); www.statravel.co.th); Singapore ([☎ 6737 7188](http://6737 7188); www.statravel.com.sg);

Hong Kong ([☎ 2736 1618](http://2736 1618); www.statravel.com.hk); Japan ([☎ 03 5391 2922](http://03 5391 2922); www.statravel.co.jp)

STIC Travels (www.stictravel.com) Delhi ([☎ 11-233 57 468](http://11-233 57 468)); Mumbai ([☎ 22-221 81 431](http://22-221 81 431)). Also has offices in dozens of other Indian cities.

From Australia & New Zealand

There are direct flights from Sydney on Qantas, and from Perth on Qantas and SAA, to Jo'burg and Cape Town (flying time about 14 hours from Sydney, 10½ hours from Perth). Air Mauritius has a few direct flights from Perth to Mauritius with a stopover, followed by a direct flight to Jo'burg. Alternatively, you can connect on Air Mauritius via Singapore, Hong Kong or Mumbai (Bombay). Ticket discounters include **Flight Centre** ([☎ Australia-wide 131 600](http://131 600); www.flightcentre.com.au) and **STA Travel** ([☎ 1300-733 035](http://1300-733 035); www.statravel.com.au), both with branches around the country. Singapore Airlines and Malaysia Airlines are both worth checking for special deals, and return tickets to/from the UK via Jo'burg and Asia are also worth looking into.

There are no direct flights from New Zealand; the best options are going via Australia, Singapore or Malaysia. **Flight Centre** (☎ 0800-243 544; www.flightcentre.co.nz) and **STA Travel** (☎ 0508-782 872; www.statravel.co.nz) both have branches throughout the country. The site www.travel.co.nz is recommended for online bookings.

Also check with some of the operators listed on p631.

From Canada & the USA

SAA flies direct from New York and Atlanta to Jo'burg (17½ hours), and this is generally one of the least expensive routings. Otherwise, the cheapest routing is generally to London on a discounted transatlantic ticket, where you can then purchase a separate ticket on to Johannesburg or Cape Town. Most of the airlines mentioned under Continental Europe also offer through-fares from North America. From the US west coast, you can sometimes get good deals via Asia. Malaysia Airlines flies from Los Angeles to Kuala Lumpur, from where you can connect to Jo'burg and Cape Town.

Discount travel agents in the USA are known as consolidators (although you won't see a sign on the door saying 'Consolidator'). San Francisco is the ticket-consolidator capital of America, although some good deals can be found in Los Angeles, New York and other big cities. See p624 for recommended online booking agencies. Other discounters:

Flight Centre (☎ 888-967 5355; www.flightcentre.ca) Canada.

STA Travel (☎ 800-781 4040; www.statravel.com) USA; for travellers under 26.

Travel Cuts (☎ 800-667 2887; www.travelcuts.com) Canada.

Some of the operators listed, p632, also sell flight-only packages.

From Continental Europe

You can fly to South Africa from any European capital, with the major hubs being Paris, Amsterdam, Frankfurt and, to a lesser extent, Zurich. All are within an approximately nine-hour flight of Jo'burg. All the European airlines listed on p622 fly into Jo'burg, with several, including British Airways and KLM, also flying into Cape Town. Some will allow you to fly into one city and

out of the other for no extra charge. The following agencies offer discounted fares:

Airfair (☎ 020 620 5121; www.airfair.nl) Netherlands.

Anyway (☎ 0892 893 892; www.anyway.fr) France.

Barcelo Viajes (☎ 902 116 226; www.barceloviajes.com) Spain.

CTS Viaggi (☎ 06 462 0431; www.cts.it) Italy; specialising in student and youth travel.

Just Travel (☎ 089 747 3330; www.justtravel.de) Germany.

Lastminute (www.lastminute.fr; www.lastminute.de) France; Germany.

Nouvelles Frontières (www.nouvelles-frontieres.fr; www.nouvelles-frontieres.es) France and Spain.

OTU Voyages (www.otu.fr) France.

STA Travel (☎ 01805-456 422; www.statravel.de) Germany; for travellers under the age of 26.

Voyageurs du Monde (☎ 01 40 15 11 15; www.vdm.com) France.

From the Middle East

The best connections are to Jo'burg from Cairo (Air Kenya via Nairobi), and from Dubai (Emirates). Agencies to try in the region include the following:

Al-Rais Travels (www.alrais.com) Dubai.

Egypt Panorama Tours (☎ 02-359 0200; www.eptours.com) Cairo.

Orion-Tour (www.oriontour.com) Istanbul.

The Israel Student Travel Association (ISTA; ☎ 02-625 7257) Jerusalem.

From South America

SAA and **Varig** (www.varig.com.br) link São Paulo and Jo'burg (about nine hours), with connections in South America to Rio de Janeiro, Brasília and various other cities. Malaysia Airlines flies between Buenos Aires, Cape Town and Jo'burg. Discounters include the following:

ASATEJ (☎ 54-011 4114-7595; www.asatej.com) Argentina.

IVI Tours (☎ 0212-993 6082; www.ividiomas.com) Venezuela.

The Student Travel Bureau (☎ 3038 1555; www.stb.com.br) Brazil.

From the UK & Ireland

Airlines flying between London and South Africa include British Airways, Virgin Atlantic and SAA. Flying time is about 13½ hours, and fares are very competitive. There are no direct flights between Ireland and South Africa. You'll need to connect via London or a Continental European capital.

Most British travel agents are registered with the **Association of British Travel Agents** (ABTA; www.abta.com), which will give you some protection if the agent you buy your ticket from goes out of business. Tickets from unregistered bucket shops are riskier but sometimes cheaper. London is the best place to buy a ticket, but specialist agencies elsewhere in the UK can provide comparable value. Recommended travel agencies include the following:

Bridge the World (☎ 0870 444 7474; www.b-t-w.co.uk)

Flight Centre (☎ 0870 890 8099; flightcentre.co.uk)

Flightbookers (☎ 0870 814 4001; www.ebookers.com)

North-South Travel (☎ 01245 608 291; www.northsouthtravel.co.uk) North-South Travel donates part of its profit to projects in the developing world.

Quest Travel (☎ 0870 442 3542; www.questtravel.com)

STA Travel (☎ 0870 160 0599; www.statravel.co.uk) For travellers under the age of 26

Trailfinders (www.trailfinders.co.uk)

Travel Bag (☎ 0870 890 1456; www.travelbag.co.uk)

Also check ads in the travel pages of the weekend broadsheet newspapers, in *Time Out*, the *Evening Standard*, in the free online magazine **TNT** (www.tntmagazine.com) and in the free *SA Times*, which is aimed at South Africans in the UK.

LAND Bicycle

There are no restrictions on bringing your own bicycle into South Africa, Lesotho or Swaziland. Two helpful sources of background information are the **International Bicycle Fund** (☎ in the USA 206-767 0848; www.ibike.org) and **SA-Cycling** (www.sa-cycling.com).

Border Crossings

BOTSWANA

There are 18 official South Africa/Botswana border posts. All are open between 8am and 4pm, and many have longer hours.

Grobler's Bridge (☎ 8am-6pm) Northwest of Polokwane/Pietersburg.

Kapfontein/Tlokweng Gate (☎ 6am-10pm) North of Zeerust; a main border post.

McCarthy's Rest (☎ 8am-4.30pm) Near Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park.

Ramatlabama (☎ 6am-8pm) North of Mafikeng; a main border post.

Skilpadshok/Pioneer Gate (☎ 6am-10pm) North-west of Zeerust; a main border post.

Some of the more remote crossings are impassable to 2WD vehicles, and may be closed completely during periods of high water. Otherwise, the crossings are hassle-free.

LESOTHO

All of landlocked Lesotho's borders (listed next) are with South Africa and are straightforward to cross. The main crossing is at Maseru Bridge, east of Bloemfontein; queues here are often very long exiting Lesotho and, on some weekend evenings, coming into Lesotho, so use other posts if possible.

LESOTHO BORDERS

Border crossing	Opening hours	Nearest Lesotho/South Africa town
Caledonspoort	6am-10pm	Butha-Buthe/Fouriesburg
Ficksburg Bridge	24hr	Maputsoe/Ficksburg
Makhaleng Bridge	8am-4pm	Mohale's Hoek/Zastron
Maseru Bridge	24hr	Maseru/Ladybrand
Nkonkoana Gate	8am-4pm	Sehlabathebe/Bushman's Nek
Ongeluksnek	8am-4pm	Mphaki/Matatiele
Peka Bridge	8am-4pm	Peka/Clocolan
Qacha's Nek	7am-8pm	Qacha's Nek/Matatiele
Ramatseiso's Gate	8am-4pm	Tsoelike/Matatiele
Sani Pass	8am-4pm	Mokhotlong/Himeville
Sephapo's Gate	8am-4pm	Mafeteng/Boesmanskop
Tele Bridge	8am-10pm	Quthing/Sterkspruit
Van Rooyen's Gate	6am-10pm	Mafeteng/Wepener

MOZAMBIQUE

The South Africa/Mozambique border posts are:

Giriyondo (☎ 8am-4pm Oct-Mar, 8am-3pm Apr-Sep) West of Massingir (Mozambique).

Komatipoort/Ressano Garcia (☎ 6am-10pm) East of Nelspruit and heavily travelled.

Kosi Bay/Ponta d'Ouro (☎ 8am-4pm) On the coast, well north of Durban.

Pafuri (☎ 8am-4pm) In Kruger National Park's north-eastern corner.

NAMIBIA

South Africa/Namibia border posts include those at Nakop/Ariamsvlei (24 hours) west of Upington; at Vioolsdrif/Noordoewer (24 hours) north of Springbok and en route to/from Cape Town; and at Rietfontein/Aroab (8am to 4.30pm) just south of Kgala-gadi Transfrontier Park. It's not possible to cross the border at Kgala-gadi Transfrontier Park itself; Rietfontein is the closest crossing. There's also a border post at Alexander Bay/Oranjemund (6am to 10pm) on the coast, but public access is usually not permitted. Note that Namibian visas are not available at any of these border posts.

SWAZILAND

There are 11 South Africa/Swaziland border posts, all of which are hassle-free. Note that small posts close at 4pm. The busiest crossing (and a good place to pick up lifts) is at Oshoek/Ngwenya (7am to 10pm) about 360km southeast of Pretoria. Some others include the following:

Golela/Lavumisa (☎ 7am-10pm) En route between Durban and Swaziland's Ezulwini Valley.

Josefsdal/Bulembu (☎ 8am-4pm) Along the unpaved road from Piggs Peak to Barberton (Mpumalanga) and tricky in wet weather.

Mahamba (☎ 7am-10pm) The best crossing to use from Piet Retief in Mpumalanga.

Mananga (☎ 7am-6pm) Southwest of Komatipoort.

Matzamo/Jeppes Reef (☎ 7am-8pm) Southwest of Malelane and a possible route to Kruger National Park.

Onverwacht/Salitje (☎ 8am-6pm) North of Pongola in KwaZulu-Natal.

The main Swaziland/Mozambique border is at busy Lomahasha/Namaacha (7am to 5pm) in the extreme northeast of the country, with another, quieter border post at Goba/Mhlumeni. Visas for Mozambique (which are no longer required for South African nationals) are currently being issued at the border, but it's better and cheaper to get them in Mbabane.

There's an E5 road tax for vehicles entering Swaziland. If you're continuing from Swaziland into Mozambique, your car must have two red hazard triangles in the boot in case of a breakdown. All of Swaziland's borders can be comfortably crossed in a 2WD, except for Josefsdal/Bulembu, which is possible in a 2WD but smoother with a 4WD.

ZIMBABWE

The only border post between Zimbabwe and South Africa is at Beitbridge (24 hours) on the Limpopo River. There's lots of smuggling, so searches are thorough and queues often long. The closest South African town to the border is Musina (15km south), where you can change money.

When entering or leaving South Africa, vehicles pay a toll at the border to use the Limpopo Bridge. South Africans need a visa (free) to get into Zimbabwe but can obtain it at the border. Most other nationalities, including Commonwealth and US passport holders, require visas, which are available at the border and payable in US dollars only.

Ignore the touts on the Zimbabwe side trying to 'help' you through Zimbabwe immigration and customs. Despite their insistence, there's no charge for the government forms needed for immigration.

Bus

Numerous buses cross the borders between South Africa and all of its neighbours. These are the most efficient way to travel overland, unless you have your own vehicle. Other than sometimes lengthy queues, there are usually no hassles. At the border, you'll need to disembark to take care of visa formalities, then reboard your same bus and continue on. Visa prices are not included in the ticket price for transborder routes. Many bus lines offer student discounts, upon presentation of a student ID.

It's also possible to travel to/from all of South Africa's neighbours by local minibus taxi. A few routes go direct, though sometimes it's necessary to walk across the border and change vehicles on the other side.

Car & Motorcycle

If you're arriving in South Africa via car or motorcycle, you'll need the vehicle's registration papers, liability insurance and your driving licence (see p635). You'll also need a *carnet de passage en douane*, which acts as a temporary waiver of import duty. The carnet – which should be arranged through your local automobile association – should specify any expensive spare parts that you're planning to carry with you, such as a gearbox. South African-registered vehicles don't need a carnet to visit any of South Africa's neighbouring countries.

The requirements for entering Swaziland and Lesotho are the same as for South Africa. If you're driving a car rented in South Africa and plan to take it across international borders, including into Lesotho or Swaziland, you'll need to get a permission form from your rental company.

For information on road rules, see p639.

Border posts generally don't have petrol stations or repair shops; you'll need to go to the nearest large town.

From Botswana**BUS**

From Jo'burg/Pretoria, **Intercape Mainliner** (☎ 0861 287 287, 021-380 4400; www.intercape.co.za) runs daily buses to Gaborone (R150, six hours). A cheaper but less safe and less comfortable alternative is one of the minibuses that run throughout the day between Jo'burg and Gaborone (about R100, six hours) via Mafikeng (North-West Province). In Gaborone, these leave from the northwest corner of the main bus terminal, starting at 6am. In Jo'burg, departures are from Park Station. To do the trip in stages, take a City Link bus from Jo'burg to Mafikeng, from where there are direct minibuses over the border to Lobatse (1½ hours). There are also direct minibuses between Jo'burg and Palapye (Botswana) via Martin's Drift (eight hours).

TRAIN

There are no cross-border trains, but it's possible to travel the Botswana leg of the journey between Francistown, near the border with Zimbabwe, and Lobatse, near the border with South Africa, via Gaborone.

From Lesotho**BUS**

Big Sky Coaches (www.bigskycoaches.co.za) runs two buses daily in each direction between Bloemfontein and Maseru Bridge (R35, three hours), with express services from Bloemfontein (two hours) on Friday and on Saturday morning, and from Maseru Bridge on Friday and on Sunday afternoon. Tickets are sold at the Big Sky booths at Bloemfontein's Central Park, and on the bus at Maseru Bridge.

Via minibus taxi, the quickest connections are from Bloemfontein to Botshabelo (Mtabelo; R30, one hour), and then from there to Maseru (R15, 1½ hours). There

are also at least three buses weekly between Jo'burg and Maseru (six to seven hours), and daily minibus taxis between both Jo'burg and Ladybrand (16km from the Maseru Bridge border crossing) and Maseru. All these routes will bring you into Maseru coming from South Africa; leaving Maseru, you'll need to go to the South Africa side of Maseru Bridge.

Other useful connections include a daily minibus taxi between Mokhotlong (Lesotho) and Underberg (South Africa) via Sani Pass (see p565); and several taxis daily between Qacha's Nek (Lesotho) and Matatiele (South Africa; about R15, 45 minutes). If you're travelling between Jo'burg and northern Lesotho, take a minibus taxi to Ficksburg, cross the border, and then get a minibus taxi on to Butha-Buthe and points north. There are sometimes direct taxis between Jo'burg and Butha-Buthe via Caledonspoort border (about R125, five hours).

CAR

The easiest entry points for car and motorcycle are on the northern and western sides of the country. Most of the entry points to the south and east are unpaved, though all are possible in a 2WD except Sani Pass. You'll need a 4WD to enter Lesotho via Sani Pass; it's possible to exit via this route with a 2WD with sufficient clearance, but a 4WD is recommended.

It's more economical to rent a car in South Africa than in Lesotho (you'll need the necessary permission papers, see p636). There's a road tax of M5 (M4 at smaller border posts) payable on entering Lesotho.

From Mozambique**BUS**

Several large 'luxury' buses go daily between Jo'burg/Pretoria and Maputo via Nelspruit and Komatipoort (R160 to R220, eight to nine hours). These include the following: **Greyhound** (☎ 012-323 1154; www.greyhound.co.za) **Intercape Mainliner** (☎ 0861 287 287, 021-380 4400; www.intercape.co.za) **Panthera Azul** (☎ 011-618 8811, in Maputo 021-302 077, 302 083; www.pantherazul.com) **Translux** (☎ 011-774 3333; www.translux.co.za)

You can also travel in each direction on these lines between Nelspruit and Maputo, but not between Nelspruit and Jo'burg.

Alternatively, the **Baz Bus** (☎ 021-439 2323; www.bazbus.com) links Jo'burg/Pretoria, Nelspruit and Durban with Manzini (Swaziland), from where you can get a minibus taxi to Maputo. See p417 for more on the Baz Bus.

Panthera Azul has buses three times weekly between Durban and Maputo (R230, 8½ hours) via Big Bend (Swaziland) and Namaacha.

Minibuses depart from Maputo daily in the morning for the Namaacha/Lomahasha border post (US\$2, 1½ hours) with some continuing on until Manzini (US\$4.50, 3½ hours).

CAR

For travel to/from Mozambique via the Kosi Bay border, you'll need your own vehicle (4WD is necessary on the Mozambique side). Alternatively, most places to stay in Ponta d'Ouro (Mozambique) do transfers for about US\$20. Hitching between the border and Ponta d'Ouro is easy on weekends and during South African school holidays.

There's a good sealed toll road connecting Jo'burg with Maputo via Ressano Garcia, with tolls on the South African side between Middelburg and Witbank, at Machadodorp and 45km east of Nelspruit.

From Mozambique to Swaziland via either Namaacha or Goba, the road is good tarmac, and easily negotiated with 2WD.

TRAIN

The daily (except Saturday) *Komati* train operated by Shosholoz Meyl (see p641) links Jo'burg and Komatipoort via Pretoria and Nelspruit (1st//2nd/economy class from R185/130/70, 13 to 14 hours). Once at Komatipoort, you can change to the Mozambican train to Maputo (Mtc15,000, economy class only, five hours), but as service on the Mozambique side is so slow, it is better to take a minibus (US\$3.50, 1½ hours). Even if you take the train the whole way, you'll need to buy the ticket for the Mozambique section at the border.

From Namibia BUS

The **Intercape Mainliner** (www.intercape.co.za) runs four times weekly between Cape Town and Windhoek via Upington (R485, 20 hours). It's also possible to travel between Jo'burg

and Windhoek with Intercape Mainliner (R615, 25 hours) on these same days, with a change of buses in Upington.

TRAIN

The **Trans-Namib** (☎ Namibia 061-298 2175; www.transnamib.com.na) 'StarLine' runs twice weekly between Windhoek and Upington (25 hours).

From Swaziland BUS

The best connections are on the **Baz Bus** (☎ 021-439 2323; www.bazbus.com), which runs from Jo'burg/Pretoria to Manzini via Nelspruit, and between Durban and Manzini via the KwaZulu-Natal coast.

Minibus taxis run daily between Jo'burg (Park Station), Mbabane and Manzini (R7, four hours), between Manzini and Durban (R120, eight hours), and between Manzini and Maputo (Mozambique; US\$4.50, 2½ hours). For many routes, you'll need to change minibuses at the border. Most long-distance taxis leave early in the morning.

HITCHING

If you're hitching into Swaziland, most South Africans enter through the Oshoek/Ngwenya border post. The casinos in the north (near the Matsamo/Jeppe's Reef border post) and southwest (near the Mahamba border post) attract traffic, especially on weekends, and are also good places to look for lifts into/out of the country.

CROSS-BORDER RAIL LINKS

Other than the *Trans-Namib* (above) and the Komati cross-border connection (left), there are no regularly scheduled passenger rail services between South Africa and neighbouring countries. However, some of the special trains listed on p642 do cross-border routes. *Shongololo Express* has a 16-day South Africa routing that also takes in Mbabane (Swaziland), Bulawayo, Great Zimbabwe and Victoria Falls (all Zimbabwe) and Maputo (Mozambique), and another linking Cape Town with various points in Namibia. *Rovos Rail* has a route linking Pretoria with Swapkomund (Namibia), and another that passes through Victoria Falls and Bulawayo en route between Cape Town and Dar es Salaam (Tanzania).

See p640 for general information on hitching.

From Zimbabwe BUS

At the time of research, bus services between Jo'burg and Zimbabwe were suspended, due in part to fuel shortages. For connections between Jo'burg and the border, see p417.

SEA

South Africa is an important stop on world shipping routes. Cape Town in particular is a major port of call for cruise ships. Many cruise ships also stop at Durban, and several freighter lines sailing from Europe have passenger cabins. It's also possible to find both cruise and freighter lines linking South African ports with various points in Mozambique (including the Bazaruto Archipelago), Madagascar and Mauritius.

The thrill of approaching the tip of the continent by sea doesn't come cheap. Even on the freighters, passenger accommodation is usually in comfortable (sometimes even plush) cabins. Expect to pay from about US\$2500 per person one way for a 23- to 27-day journey from a UK port to Cape Town, often via the Canary Islands. Fares from South Africa tend to be lower than fares to South Africa. Some useful contacts:

Freighter World Cruises Inc (☎ 800-531 7774, 626-449 3106; www.freighterworld.com) Based in the USA.

Royal Mail Ship St Helena (☎ 020-7575 6480; www.rms-st-helena.com) Based in the UK.

Safmarine (☎ 021-408 6911; www.safmarine.com) This company actively seeks passengers for its container ships, which sail to many of the world's major ports; fares are often negotiable.

Starlight Lines (www.starlight.co.za) A good contact for connections to Mozambique, Madagascar and Mauritius; based in South Africa.

Strand Voyages (☎ 020-7766 8220; www.strandtravel.co.uk) Based in the UK.

Tall Ships (www.tallships.co.za) Has cargo ships between Durban and various Mozambican ports that sometimes take passengers; based in South Africa.

The Cruise People (☎ 020-7723 2450, 0800 526 313; www.cruisepeople.co.uk) Based in the UK.

Another good source of information about routes and the shipping lines plying them is the *OAG Cruise & Ferry Guide*, published

quarterly by the **Reed Travel Group** (☎ 01582-600 111) in the UK. Durban is one of the better places to look for a lift on private yachts sailing up the East African coast.

TOURS

Dozens of tour and safari companies organise package tours to South Africa. As an alternative, if you prefer a more independent approach, you can prebook flights and hotels for the first few nights, then join tours locally (see p641). Almost all operators include Kruger National Park and Cape Town and the Peninsula in their itineraries. For special interests (bird-watching, flower-watching etc), check the advertisements in specialist magazines. Following is a list of tour companies:

Australia

Adventure World (☎ 02-8913 0755; www.adventureworld.com.au) Offers a wide range of tours, safaris, car hire and hotel packages in South and Southern Africa.

African Wildlife Safaris (☎ 03-9696 2899; www.africanwildlifesafaris.com.au) Customised wildlife safaris in South Africa and neighbouring countries.

Peregrine Travel (☎ 03-8601 4444; www.peregrine.net.au) Caters to all budgets, from overland truck tours to upscale wildlife safaris, and including a South Africa and Swaziland cycling itinerary.

France

Makila Voyages (☎ 01 42 96 80 00; www.makila.fr) Upper-end tailored tours in South Africa and Swaziland, plus safaris.

UK

Dragoman (☎ 0870-499 4475; www.dragoman.co.uk) Overland tours.

Exodus Travels (☎ 0870-240 5550; www.exodus-travels.co.uk) Organises a variety of tours, including overland trips, and walking and cycling itineraries, covering South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland.

Guerba (☎ 01373-826 611; www.guerba.com) Overland tours.

In the Saddle (☎ 01299-272 997; www.inthesaddle.com) Strictly for horse aficionados, with various rides in South Africa, including in the Western Cape and in the Greater St Lucia Wetlands Park.

Naturetrek (☎ 01962-733 051; www.naturetrek.co.uk) Specialist nature tours, including springtime wildflower itineraries in Namaqualand and a botanically oriented tour in the Drakensberg and Lesotho.

Temple World (☎ 020-8940 4114; www.templeworld.co.uk) Upper-end luxury 'educational' tours in South

Africa, Swaziland and elsewhere in the region focusing on history, ecology and wildlife.

Wildlife Encounters (☎ 01737-214 214; www.wildlife-encounters.co.uk) Train-based safaris in South Africa, including Kruger National Park.

USA

Adventure Centre (☎ 510-654 1879, 800-228 2747; www.adventurecenter.com) Budget to midrange tours including a 22-day South Africa circuit that takes in bits of Swaziland and Lesotho; it's also the US agent for several overland operators.

Africa Adventure Company (☎ 954-491 8877, 800-882 9453; www.africa-adventure.com) Upper-end wildlife safaris, including the private reserves around Kruger National Park, plus other itineraries in Cape Town and along the Garden Route.

Born Free Safaris (☎ 800-472 3274; www.bornfreesafaris.com) Offers a good range of Cape to Kruger itineraries.

Bushtracks (☎ 707-433 4492, 800-995 8689; www.bushtracks.com) Private air luxury safaris.

International Expeditions (☎ 205-428 1700, 800-633 4734; www.ietravel.com) Upper-end, wildlife-oriented safaris that sometimes take in Cape Town and other South Africa destinations.

Wilderness Travel (☎ 510-558 2488, 800-368 2794; www.wildernesstravel.com) Offers various southern Africa packages, including a two-week Cape Town and Garden Route itinerary.

GETTING AROUND

AIR

Airlines in South Africa, Lesotho & Swaziland

In addition to being the international flag carrier, **South African Airways** (SAA; ☎ 0861-359 722, 011-978 5313; www.flysaa.com) is the main domestic carrier, with an extensive and efficient route network to major cities. Its subsidiaries, **SAairlink** (☎ 011-978 5313; www.saairlink.co.za) and **SA Express** (☎ 011-978 5577; www.saexpress.co.za), also service domestic routes and share SAA's excellent safety record.

Domestic fares aren't cheap. If you plan to take some internal flights, check with a travel agent before you leave home for special deals on tickets and air passes. If these are available, it may be worth booking your domestic flights from home. It can also sometimes be cheaper to book domestic connections from home if these can be tied into your international flight

ticket. Another way to save significantly – whether you're at home or already in South Africa – is to book online rather than going into a travel agent or ticket office, which can sometimes save you up to 50% of the standard quoted ticket price. General fare and route information is given in the regional chapters, and local travel agencies are listed under the Information sections for major cities.

In addition to SAA and its affiliates, airlines flying domestically include those following:

1time (☎ 0861-345345; www.1time.co.za) No-frills flights linking Jo'burg with Cape Town, Durban and East London, George and Port Elizabeth, and between Cape Town and East London. Also offers car rentals.

Comair (☎ 0860-435 922, 011-921 0222; www.comair.co.za) Operates British Airways flights within Africa, and has flights linking Cape Town, Durban, Jo'burg and Port Elizabeth.

Kulula.com (☎ 0861-585 852; www.kulula.com) Operates no-frills flights linking Jo'burg, Cape Town, Durban, George, Port Elizabeth and Mpumalanga Kruger. Also offers airport transfer services and car rentals.

Nationwide Airlines (☎ 0861-737 737, 011-344 7200; www.nationwideair.co.za) Operates in partnership with Virgin Atlantic, and has flights linking Jo'burg, Cape Town, Durban, George, Port Elizabeth, Sun City and Nelspruit.

Swazi Express Airways (☎ 518 6840, 031-408 1115; www.swaziexpress.com) Several flights weekly connecting Manzini with Durban, and with Maputo and Vilankulo (Mozambique); charter service in Swaziland and surrounding region.

Swaziland Airlink (☎ 518 6155; www.saairlink.co.za) Daily flights between Jo'burg and Manzini/Matsapha.

BICYCLE

South Africa

As long as you're fit enough to handle the many hills, South Africa offers some rewarding cycling. It has scenic and diverse terrain, an abundance of camping places, and many good roads, most of which don't carry much traffic (although most don't have any sort of shoulder). The Cape Peninsula and the Winelands of the Western Cape are excellent biking areas. The Wild Coast in the Eastern Cape is beautiful and challenging, while the northern lowveld offers wide plains.

When planning, keep in mind that much of the country (except for Western Cape and the west coast) gets most of its rain

in summer (late November to March), in the form of violent thunderstorms. When it isn't raining, summer days can be unpleasantly hot, especially in the steamy lowveld. Distances between major towns are often long but, except in isolated areas such as the Karoo or Limpopo Province, you're rarely very far from a village or a farmhouse.

Safety is another consideration. Before heading off anywhere, contact other cyclists through local cycling clubs or bicycle shops to get the most recent information on the routes you're considering. **SA-Cycling** (www.sa-cycling.com) posts cyclists' diaries, suggests several routes, and has listings of cycling clubs. Other things to remember are that it's illegal to cycle on highways, and that roads near urban areas are too busy for comfort.

Mixing cycling with public transport doesn't work well, as most bus lines don't want bicycles in their luggage holds, and minibuses don't carry luggage on the roof. In some cases, the only alternative may be to arrange transporting your bicycle with a carrier company.

Mountain bikes and their spare parts are widely available. However, it's often difficult to find specialised parts for touring bikes, especially away from Cape Town and Jo'burg. It's worth establishing a relationship with a good bike shop in a city before you head off into the veld, in case you need something couriered to you. Bring a good lock to counter the ever-present risk of theft, leave the bicycle inside your accommodation (preferably inside your room) and chain it to something solid.

Lesotho & Swaziland

Both Lesotho and Swaziland are excellent cycling destinations, especially Lesotho, although the country's mountainous terrain means that it's only for the fit. You'll need a mountain bike for both countries; stock up on spares in South Africa. The main weather constraints are icy roads in winter in Lesotho, and thunderstorms and flooding in both countries during the summer.

The classic mountain-bike route in Lesotho is over the Sani Pass, but there are almost unlimited other options as well. It's sometimes possible to rent bicycles through some of the lodges on the South Africa side of the Sani Pass.

Swaziland is also ideally suited for cycling, except for main towns and the heavily travelled Ezulwini Valley. Other options include the shorter mountain-bike trails in Hlane Royal National Park and in Mlilwane Wildlife Sanctuary, both of which rent bicycles.

It's not common to transport bicycles on public transport in Lesotho and Swaziland, but you can usually arrange something with the driver.

Hire & Purchase

If you'll be doing extensive cycling, it's best to bring your own bicycle. For day rides, some hostels in South Africa have short-term mountain bike rental. Rentals can also sometimes be arranged through bike shops in Cape Town and other cities, though you'll usually be required to leave a credit-card deposit.

There's a good selection of mountain bikes for sale in all larger South African cities, with Cape Town probably the best place to look. For touring bikes, the main markets are Cape Town and Jo'burg. To resell your bicycle at the end of your trip, hostel bulletin boards are good places to advertise.

BOAT

Despite South Africa's long coastline, there are few opportunities to travel by boat. The most likely possibilities are taking a ship between Cape Town and Durban, and between Port Elizabeth and Durban. Useful contacts include the local offices of **Safmarine** (☎ 021-408 6911; www.safmarine.com) and **Tall Ships** (www.tallships.co.za), as well as local yacht clubs. Also check out the informative www.cruiser.co.za, which posts a bulletin board matching up crews with ships.

BUS

South Africa

Buses in South Africa aren't the deal that they are in many other countries. However, together with the less-appealing minibus taxis (see p640), they're the main form of public transport, with a reliable and reasonably comfortable network linking all major cities. Note that many long-distance services run through the night.

A good alternative to the standard bus lines is **Baz Bus** (☎ 021-439 2323; www.bazbus.com), catering almost exclusively to backpackers and travellers. It offers hop-on, hop-off

fares and door-to-door service between Cape Town and Jo'burg via the Northern Drakensberg, Durban and the Garden Route. It also has a loop from Durban via Zululand and Swaziland to Jo'burg, passing near Kruger National Park. Point-to-point fares are more expensive than on the other major lines, but can work out more economically if you take advantage of the hop-on/hop-off feature. It's also worth checking out its one- and two-week travel passes.

The Baz Bus drops off and picks up at many hostels along the way, and has transfer arrangements with those off the main routes for a nominal extra charge. You can book directly with Baz Bus, as well as with most hostels.

In partnership with Translux, **City to City** (☎ 011-774 3333, 0861-589 282; www.translux.co.za) has taken over the routes that once carried people from the homelands to and from the big cities during the apartheid regime. Services are less expensive than on the other lines, and go to many off-the-beaten-track places, including townships and mining towns. Destinations from Jo'burg include Mthatha, Nelspruit, Hazzyview, Beitbridge (for Zimbabwe), Piet Retief and various towns in KwaZulu-Natal. Many services originate at Jo'burg's Park Station transit centre, where there are booking counters and an information desk.

Offering an extensive network, with routes and pricing similar to those for Translux, **Greyhound** (☎ 083-915 9000; www.greyhound.co.za) also has a Jo'burg to Durban route via Zululand and Richards Bay, and offers frequent special deals.

Servicing primarily the western half of the country, plus Nelspruit (en route to Mozambique), **Intercape Mainliner** (☎ 0861 287 287, 021-380 4400; www.intercape.co.za) prices are somewhat less than Translux and Greyhound. For longer hauls, it's worth paying more (about 8% above regular fares) for a reclining seat on one of Intercape's new Sleepliner buses.

SA Roadlink (☎ 011-333 2223; www.saroadlink.co.za) is a new line linking Pretoria and Johannesburg with Bloemfontein, Port Elizabeth, East London, Mthatha, Durban and points in between. Though routes are still limited, prices are very reasonable – generally just above City to City's fares.

The main long-distance bus operator, **Translux** (☎ 011-774 3333, 0861-589 282; www.translux

.co.za), has services connecting Cape Town, Knysna, Plettenberg Bay, Durban, Bloemfontein, Port Elizabeth, East London, Mthatha, Nelspruit (en route to Mozambique) and various towns along the Garden Route.

There are no class tiers on any of the bus lines, although Translux, Intercape and Greyhound, as well as SA Roadlink's newer buses would be the equivalent of 'luxury' lines, with air-con and often video and a toilet. City to City's service is no-frills.

Except for Baz Bus, which has its own pricing structure, fares are roughly calculated by distance, though short runs are disproportionately expensive. Some sample approximate one-way fares/durations: Jo'burg to Cape Town (R440, 19 hours); Jo'burg to Durban (R85 to R150, eight hours); and Cape Town to Knysna (R170, eight hours). Baz Bus one-way fares for hop-on, hop-off service are: Cape Town to Durban via the Garden Route (R1600); Jo'burg–Swaziland–Durban–Drakensberg–Jo'burg loop (R1010).

Prices rise during school holidays; all lines offer student and senior-citizen discounts, and Intercape has backpacker discounts. Also inquire about travel passes, if you'll be taking several bus journeys, and always check with the bus companies to see if they are running any specials, which can sometimes save you up to 40%.

For the main lines, reservations should be made at least 24 hours in advance (or 72 hours in advance for Intercape Mainliner, and as much in advance as possible for travel during peak periods). It's sometimes possible to get a seat at the last minute, but this shouldn't be counted on.

Lesotho

Lesotho has a good network of buses and minibuses (known locally as 'minibus taxis' or – more commonly – just 'taxis') covering most parts of the country. Buses are slightly cheaper than minibus taxis, and somewhat slower, and service all major towns. Minibus taxis also service the major towns, as well as many smaller towns.

For the larger buses, although you'll be quoted long-distance fares, it's best to just buy a ticket to the next major town. Most of the passengers will get off there anyway, which means you'll likely be stuck waiting for the bus to fill up again while other buses leave first. Buying tickets in stages is only

slightly more expensive than buying a direct ticket. Heading northeast from Maseru, you usually need to change at Maputsoe, although this also sometimes happens en route into Maputsoe if your bus meets another coming the other way.

There are no classes, and service is very much no-frills. It's not necessary (or possible) to reserve a seat in advance. Most departures are in the morning (generally, the longer the journey, the earlier the departure).

Swaziland

In Swaziland, there are only a few domestic buses, most of which start and terminate at the main stop in the centre of Mbabane. The main form of public transport is minibus. These run almost everywhere, with frequent stops en route, and cost slightly more than buses. Minibuses leave when full; no reservations are necessary. Sample fares include: Mbabane to Manzini (E7, 35 minutes); Mbabane to Piggs Peak (E13, one hour); Manzini to Big Bend (E7, one hour).

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

South Africa is ideal for driving, and away from the main bus and train routes, having your own wheels is the best way to get around. If you're in a group, it's also often the most economical. Most major roads are in excellent condition, and off the main routes there are interesting back roads to explore.

The country is crossed by many national routes (eg N1). On some sections a toll is payable, based on distance. There's always plenty of warning that you're about to enter a toll section (marked by a black 'T' in a yellow circle), and there's always an alternative route (marked by a black 'A' in a yellow circle). On alternative routes, signposting is sparse, generally only directing you to smaller towns or giving route numbers, rather than the direction of the next large city. Smaller roads are numbered (eg R44 – shown in this book as Rte 44), and when you ask directions most people will refer to these numbers rather than destinations, so it pays to have a good road map.

Lesotho and Swaziland are also well-suited to driving, though you'll find more gravel and dirt away from major routes. Main routes in Lesotho are numbered beginning with A1 (Main North Rd), and side routes branching off from these are given

'B' route numbers. Ice is a major hazard in winter.

Swaziland is crossed roughly from west to east by the MR3, which is a major highway as far east as Manzini. Good tarmac roads also connect other major towns; elsewhere you'll find mostly unpaved roads, most in reasonably good condition, except after heavy rains. For more on road conditions, see (p638).

For information on road maps, which are readily available in all three countries, see p613.

Automobile Associations

The **Automobile Association of South Africa** (AASA; ☎ membership 083-843 22, emergencies 083-843 22; www.aasa.co.za) has a limited vehicle breakdown service that can be useful if you'll be driving in the areas it covers. It also has a good supply of maps, available free to members and for sale in many tourist offices and bookstores. For breakdown service, hold onto the window stickers that you get with membership. The initial joining fee is waived for members of many foreign motoring associations, so it's worth bringing your membership details.

In theory, the AASA covers Lesotho and Swaziland, although its towing and breakdown service doesn't extend to these countries. In South Africa, the emergency breakdown service covers Gauteng, Cape Town, Durban, Pietermaritzburg, East London and Port Elizabeth. In Lesotho and Swaziland, you'll need to rely on local repair facilities in the major towns.

Bringing Your Own Vehicle

For requirements on bringing your own vehicle, see p628.

Driving Licence

In South Africa, you can use your driving licence from your home country if it is in

PARKING

In Johannesburg and other areas where secure parking is an issue, information is included on parking availability (P) in Sleeping listings. In rural areas, and in Lesotho and Swaziland, hotels generally have guarded lots.

ROAD DISTANCES (KM)

Bloemfontein	---																		
Cape Town	998	---																	
Durban	628	1660	---																
East London	546	1042	667	---															
George	764	436	1240	630	---														
Graaff-Reinet	422	672	945	388	342	---													
Johannesburg	396	1405	598	992	1168	826	---												
Kimberley	175	960	842	722	734	501	467	---											
Maseru	157	1160	590	630	913	519	438	334	---										
Mbabane	677	1680	562	1238	1450	1097	361	833	633	---									
Nelspruit	754	1779	689	1214	1509	1167	358	832	713	173	---								
Polokwane (Pietersburg)	727	1736	929	1323	1499	1595	331	798	769	488	315	---							
Port Elizabeth	676	756	927	300	330	251	1062	763	822	1548	1373	1398	---						
Pretoria	454	1463	656	1050	1226	859	58	525	488	372	328	273	1119	---					
Springbok	975	554	1642	1365	846	911	1274	800	1252	1678	1543	1474	1289	1200	---				
Upington	576	821	1243	958	857	667	875	401	731	1157	1144	1075	902	813	387	---			
Bloemfontein		Cape Town	Durban	East London	George	Graaff-Reinet	Johannesburg	Kimberley	Maseru	Mbabane	Nelspruit	Polokwane (Pietersburg)	Port Elizabeth	Pretoria	Springbok	Upington			

English (or if you have a certified translation), and if it carries your photo; otherwise you'll need an international driving permit, obtainable from a motoring organisation in your home country. In Lesotho and Swaziland, licences from most other countries are accepted for stays of less than six months, as long as they are in English, or you have a certified translation.

Fuel & Spare Parts

Petrol costs about R5.40 per litre for leaded or unleaded in all three countries, and must be paid for in cash. There's no self-service. An attendant will always fill up your tank for you, clean your windows and ask if the oil or water needs checking, and should be tipped between R2 and R5. In addition to unleaded petrol (suitable for newer cars with catalytic converters), lead-replacement petrol (LRP) is also available for older cars that used to run on 97 octane leaded petrol.

Along main routes in South Africa and Swaziland, there are plenty of petrol stations, many open 24 hours. In rural areas, and in Lesotho, fill up whenever you can,

and in Lesotho, carry a jerry can with extra fuel. Unleaded fuel is readily available, except in the more remote areas of Lesotho. There are service stations in all major South African towns. In Lesotho, the main service stations are in Maseru, with limited facilities in other major towns. In Swaziland, Mbabane and Manzini have the best facilities; Manzini is the best place for sourcing spare parts.

Hire

Car rental is relatively inexpensive in South Africa. Most companies have a minimum age requirement of 21 years (23 years in Swaziland). All accept major credit cards. Car-rental rates in Swaziland are similar to those in South Africa. For Lesotho, it usually works out less expensive to rent the vehicle in South Africa and drive it over the border.

Major international car-rental companies are listed below. All the South Africa listings have offices in major cities; in Swaziland, the only agents are in Manzini; in Lesotho, they are in Maseru.

Rates start at about US\$40 per day including insurance and 200km free per day. Rental of a 4WD starts at about US\$60, though better deals are often available. For cheaper rates and unlimited mileage deals, it's best to book and prepay through your agent at home before coming to South Africa. If a non-nominated driver has an accident, you will not be covered by insurance.

Around About Cars (☎ 0860 422 0422; www.aroundaboutcars.com)

Avis South Africa (☎ 0861-113 748, 011-923 3660; www.avis.co.za); Swaziland (Matsapha Airport ☎ 518 6226); Lesotho (Moshoeshe Airport ☎ 2235 0328, Lesotho Sun Hotel ☎ 2232 0087)

Budget South Africa (☎ 0861-016 622, 011-398 0123; www.budget.co.za); Lesotho (☎ 2231 6344)

Europcar (☎ 0800 011 344, 011-574 4457; www.europcar.co.za) South Africa.

Hertz (☎ 021-935 4800, 011-390 9700; www.hertz.co.za) South Africa.

It's also worth checking with **Travelocity** (www.travelocity.com) and the no-frills airline **Kulula.com** (www.kulula.com), both of which often have good car-rental deals.

Local car-rental companies are usually less expensive, though they tend to come and go, and some have limits on how far you can take the car from the rental point. Several are listed below, all with agents in major cities. Also check with backpacker hostels; many can arrange better deals, from around US\$25 per day or less.

Affordable Car Hire (☎ 404 9136; affordable@posix.co.sz) Swaziland.

Imperial South Africa (☎ 0861 131 000, 011-574 1000; www.imperialcarrental.co.za); Swaziland (☎ 044 0459, 518 4396); Lesotho (☎ 2235 0292)

Tempest (☎ 0860-031 666, 011-396 1080; www.tempestcarhire.co.za) South Africa.

Renting a camper van is another option, although one-way rentals are often not possible, or attract large fees. Some camper-van rentals include camping gear. 'Bakkie' campers, which sleep two in the back of a canopied pick-up, are cheaper. Two places to try, both in Jo'burg, are **African Leisure Travel** (☎ 011-792 1884; www.africanleisure.co.za) and **Britz 4x4 Rentals** (☎ 011-396 1860; www.britz.co.za).

For motorcycle rental, good contacts include **Motozulu** (www.motozulu.ms) in Port Shepstone (KwaZulu-Natal), and **Le Cap**

Motorcycle Hire (☎ 021-423 0823; www.lecap.co.za) in Cape Town; see also p158. Mopeds and scooters are available for hire in Cape Town and several other tourist areas.

Insurance

Insurance for third-party damage and damage to or loss of your vehicle is highly recommended, though not legally required for private-vehicle owners. It can be difficult to arrange by the month. The AASA is a good contact, and may be willing to negotiate payment for a year's worth of insurance with a pro-rata refund when you sell the car. Insurance agencies include **African Independent Brokers** (☎ 086-100 1002), **Lions Head Insurance Brokers** (☎ 021-761 8332) and **First Bowring** (☎ 021-425 1460), all based in Cape Town.

Purchase

South Africa is the best place in the region to purchase a vehicle for use on a long South Africa itinerary or on a larger sub-Saharan itinerary. Although prices tend to be cheaper in Jo'burg, most people do their buying in Cape Town – a much nicer place to spend the week or two that it will likely take for the process. Cape Town is also not a bad place to sell, as prices tend to be higher, although the market is small.

Cape Town's main congregation of used-car dealers is on Voortrekker Rd between Maitland and Belleville Sts, where you may also find a dealer willing to agree to a buy-back deal.

Buying privately, you won't have any dealer warranties, but prices will be cheaper. The weekly **Cape Ads** (www.capeads.com) is the best place to look. Also try **Auto Trader** (www.autotrader.co.za), which advertises thousands of cars around the country.

No matter who you buy from, make sure that the car details correspond accurately with the ownership (registration) papers, that there is a current licence disc on the windscreen and that the vehicle has been checked by the **police clearance department** (☎ in Cape Town 021-945 3891; ☎ 7.30am-3.30pm Mon-Fri). Check the owner's name against their identity document, and check the car's engine and chassis numbers. Consider getting the car tested – in Cape Town, try **Same Garage** (Map pp120-1; ☎ 434 1058; 309 Main Rd, Sea Point). A full test can cost up to R300; less detailed tests are around R150.

CHOOSING A DEAL

South Africa is a big country, but unless you're on a tight schedule you probably don't need to pay higher rates for unlimited kilometres. For meandering around, 400km a day should be more than enough, and if you plan to stop for a day here and there 200km a day might be sufficient.

However, if you're renting with an international company and you book through the branch in your home country, you'll probably get unlimited kilometres at no extra cost, except at peak times such as December–January. When getting quotes, be sure that they include the 14% value-added tax (VAT).

One-way rentals are usually possible with larger companies if you are driving between major cities, although there's sometimes a drop-off charge.

Choose a car powerful enough to do the job. The smallest cars are OK for one person but with any more they'll be straining on the hills, which, even on major highways, are steep. Really steep hills may also make automatics unpleasant to drive. If you'll be going into Lesotho, consider a 4WD.

During the summer months, hail damage is a distinct and costly possibility, so see if it's covered before signing the rental agreement. Many contracts used to stipulate that you couldn't enter townships. While this usually isn't the case now, check anyway. If you plan to visit Swaziland, Lesotho or any other country, check that the rental agreement permits this, and make sure you get the standard letter from the rental company granting permission.

Finally, pay attention to the amount of 'excess' (the amount for which you're liable before insurance covers the rest) built into the insurance arrangement. Sometimes you'll have the choice of paying a higher insurance premium to lower or cancel the excess. A few companies offer 100% damage and theft insurance at a higher rate.

Cheap cars will often be sold without a roadworthy certificate. This certificate is required when you register the change-of-ownership form and pay tax for a licence disc. A roadworthy used to be difficult to obtain but some private garages are now allowed to issue them (R220), and some will overlook minor faults.

For something decent, plan on spending at least R25,000. For a 4WD, Series 1, 2 and 3 Land Rovers will cost from R15,000 to R40,000, depending on the condition. A recommended contact in Cape Town is **Graham Duncan Smith** (☎ 021-797 3048), who's a Land Rover expert and has helped people buy 4WDs in the past; he charges a R120 consultation fee and R165 per hour for engineering work.

To register your car, present yourself along with the roadworthy, a current licence, an accurate ownership certificate, a completed change-of-ownership form (signed by the seller), a clear photocopy of your ID (passport) along with the original, and your money to the **City Treasurer's Department, Motor Vehicle Registration Division** (Map pp120-1; ☎ 021-400 4900; ☎ 8am-2pm Mon-Fri) in the Civic Centre on the foreshore in Cape Town. Call ahead to check how much

cash you'll need, but it will be under R500. Blank change-of-ownership forms are also available here.

Road Conditions SOUTH AFRICA

Main roads are generally in excellent condition. Outside large cities and towns, you may encounter dirt roads, most of which are regularly graded and reasonably smooth. In the former homeland areas, beware of dangerous potholes, washed-out roads, unannounced hairpin bends and the like.

LESOTHO

Driving in Lesotho is more challenging, although it's getting easier as new roads are built in conjunction with the Highlands Water Project. The sealed roads in the highlands are good, but very steep in places. Rain will slow you down and ice and snow in winter can make things dangerous. If you're driving an automatic car, you'll be relying heavily on your brakes to get around steep downhill corners. Away from main roads, there are still many places where even a 4WD will get into trouble. Apart from rough roads, river floodings after summer storms present the biggest

problem. People and animals on the road can also be a hazard.

There are sometimes army roadblocks, usually searching for stolen cars. If you're driving a car hired from South Africa and get stopped, you'll need to present the letter from the rental agency giving you permission to take the car into Lesotho.

SWAZILAND

Swaziland's road network is quite good, and most major routes are tarred. There are also some satisfyingly rough back roads through the bush. The road between Tshaneni (northwest of Hlane Royal National Park) and Pigg's Peak is gravel for most of the way, and slippery when wet.

Malagwane Hill, from Mbabane into the Ezulwini Valley, was once listed in the *Guinness Book of Records* as the most dangerous stretch of road in the world. Although conditions are greatly improved, driving down the Ezulwini Valley in heavy traffic and bad conditions can still be dangerous. Away from the population centres and border-crossing areas there is very little traffic.

Road Hazards

South Africa has a horrific road-accident record, with the annual death toll around 10,000 (although some estimates place it at more than 15,000). The N1 between Cape Town and Beaufort West is considered to be the most dangerous stretch of road in the country.

The main hazards are your fellow drivers, with overtaking blind and overtaking with insufficient passing room the major dangers. Drivers of cars coming up behind you will expect you to move into the emergency lane to let them pass, though the emergency lane may already be occupied. Drivers on little-used rural roads often speed and assume that there is no other traffic. Watch out especially for oncoming cars at blind corners on these roads. There is alcohol breath-testing in South Africa and in Swaziland, but given the high blood-alcohol level permitted (over 0.08% in South Africa, and 0.15% in Swaziland) drunk drivers remain a danger.

Animals and pedestrians on the roads are another hazard, especially in rural areas. Standard advice is that if you hit an animal

in an area in which you're uncertain of your safety, it's best to continue to the nearest police station and report it there. During the rainy season, and especially in higher areas of steamy KwaZulu-Natal, thick fog can slow you to a crawl. In the lowveld, summer hailstorms can damage your car.

In Lesotho, watch out for the steep terrain, hairpin turns, and ice and other inclement weather conditions.

In Swaziland, apart from drunk drivers and wandering cattle, the main danger is speeding minibuses, especially on gravel roads.

CARJACKING

In Jo'burg, and to a lesser extent in the other big cities, carjacking is a problem, though it's more likely if you're driving something flash rather than a standard rental car. The carjackers are almost always armed, and people have been killed for their cars. Stay alert, keep windows wound up and doors locked at night, and keep your taste in cars modest. If you're stopped at a red light and notice anything suspicious, it's standard practice to check that the junction is clear, and run the light. If you do get carjacked, don't resist, just hand over the keys immediately.

Road Rules

In South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland, driving is on the left-hand side of the road, as in the UK, Japan and Australia. Seatbelts are mandatory for the driver and front-seat passenger in all three countries.

There are a few local variations on road rules. The main one is the 'four-way stop' (crossroad), which can occur even on major roads. All vehicles are required to stop, with those arriving first the first to go (even if they're on a minor cross street). On free-ways, faster drivers will expect you to move into the emergency lane to let them pass, and will probably flash their hazard lights as thanks. At roundabouts, vehicles already in the roundabout, and those approaching it from the right, have the right of way.

In Swaziland, if an official or royal motorcade approaches, you're required to pull over and stop.

In Johannesburg and other urban areas, you'll encounter car guards – usually otherwise unemployed Africans from elsewhere

on the continent who will (most usefully) keep an eye on your parked car while you do your shopping or other errands. Be nice to them (they don't bite) and tip them between R2 and R5 for their services.

SPEED LIMITS

In South Africa, the speed limit is 100km/h on open roads, and 120km/h on most major highways, though it's widely ignored. The usual limit in towns is 60km/h.

In Lesotho, the speed limit is 80km/h on main roads, and 50km/h in villages. In Swaziland, it's 80km/h on open roads, and 60km/h in towns.

HITCHING

Hitching is never entirely safe in any country. This is especially true in South Africa, particularly in and near urban areas, and it's not a form of travel we can recommend. However, sometimes in rural areas it may be the only way to get somewhere. If you do decide to hitch, do so in pairs, avoid hitching at night, and let someone know where you are going. It's also advisable to catch public transport well beyond city limits before starting to hitch. Women should never hitch alone.

Hitching is easier and arguably safer in Swaziland and Lesotho, although you should still follow the same precautions. Be prepared to wait a long time for a car on back roads, and for lots of competition from locals.

LOCAL TRANSPORT

For getting around within a city or town (as opposed to intercity travel, which is covered under Buses, p633), the main options are city buses, minibus taxis and regular taxis –

either shared or private hire. In a few places, such as Cape Town and Durban, you'll have other options such as the Rikki (small open vans) and *tuk-tuk* (motorised tricycle), and Cape Town, Jo'burg and Pretoria have metro commuter trains (see p643).

Bus

Cape Town, Jo'burg, Pretoria and several other urban areas have city bus systems. Fares are cheap and routes, which are signboarded, are extensive. However, services usually stop running early in the evening, and there aren't many buses on weekends.

Minibus Taxi

Minibus taxis run almost everywhere – within cities, to the suburbs and to neighbouring towns. They leave when full and, happily – especially if you've travelled elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa – 'full' in South Africa isn't as full as it is in many neighbouring countries. Most accommodate 14 to 16 people, with the slightly larger 'Sprinters' taking about 20.

Minibus taxis have the advantages of an extensive route network and cheap prices. These are outweighed, however, by the fact that driving standards and vehicle conditions often leave a lot to be desired, and there are many accidents. The reputation of minibus taxis has also been tarnished by isolated outbreaks of gangster-style shoot-outs between the various companies competing for business, including incidents where crowded taxis were machine-gunned. Although things have settled down in recent years, minibuses in some areas and on some routes are still considered highly unsafe, and reports of muggings and other incidents remain a regular feature. In other

areas – notably central Cape Town, where they're a handy and popular way to get around – they are fine.

Away from train and main bus routes, minibus taxis may be the only choice of public transport. They're also a good way to get insights into local life. If you want to try one, read the newspapers, don't ride at night, and always ask for local advice on lines and areas to avoid before using minibus taxis as transport. As most minibus taxis don't carry luggage on the roof, stowing backpacks can be a hassle.

Although minibus taxis in Lesotho and Swaziland don't have stellar road safety records either, they have none of the violence that's associated with their South African counterparts, and are widely used, both for short and longer routes.

Private Taxi

Larger cities in all three countries have a private taxi service. (In Lesotho, you'll only find taxis in Maseru.) Occasionally, you'll find a taxi stand, but usually you'll need to telephone for a cab. Numbers are given in the Getting Around sections of the individual cities. Prices average about R8 per kilometre.

Shared Taxi

In some towns (and on some longer routes), the only transport option is a shared taxi, basically a smaller version of the minibus taxi. They are slightly more expensive than minibus taxis, and comparable in safety.

TOURS

There are dozens of tours available, ranging from budget-oriented overland truck tours to exclusive luxury safaris. The best way to get information on tours geared to budget travellers is from the network of backpacker hostels around the country. Many have travellers bulletin boards, and some are directly affiliated with budget-tour operators.

Some tour operators to try include the following:

African Routes (☎ 031-563 5080; www.africanroutes.co.za) Offers camping and overland itineraries for younger travellers, including a whirlwind one-week trip taking in Kruger National Park, Swaziland and the Drakensberg, plus various tours for seniors.

BirdWatch Cape (☎ 021-762 5059; www.birdwatch.co.za) A small outfit for twitchers, focusing on Cape Town and surrounding areas.

Bok Bus (☎ 082-320 1979; www.bokbus.com) Budget-oriented tours along the Garden Route.

Bundu Safari Company (☎ 011-675 0767; www.bundusafaris.co.za) Budget-oriented tours ranging from one to several days, focusing on Kruger National Park and the surrounding area.

Cape Town Gourmet Adventure Tours (☎ 083-693 1151; http://gourmet.cape-town.info) Dining and dining in Cape Town, plus 'wellness' tours and lots of other options in and around Cape Town and the Western Cape.

Connex (☎ 011-274 41; www.connex.co.za) Similar to Springbok-Atlas.

Eco-1st (☎ 021-559 2420; www.eco-tourisminvestments.co.za) Outdoor-oriented 'biodiversity' tours around Cape Town, plus longer itineraries taking in Kruger National Park, the Garden Route and other areas. Especially recommended for their West Coast spring flower tour.

Encompass Africa (☎ 021-434 9932; encompassafrica@yebo.co.za) A backpacker-oriented outfit offering various itineraries based out of Cape Town.

Malealea Lodge (☎ 051-436 6766; www.malealea.co.ls) The main operator for tours in Lesotho, offering everything from cross-country horse treks to 4WD excursions; can also arrange pick-ups from Bloemfontein in South Africa.

Springbok-Atlas (☎ 021-460 4700; www.springbokatlas.com) One of the major coach-tour operators, offering midrange tours along popular routes, including day tours. Aimed at older tourists.

Swazi Trails (☎ 416 2180 in Swaziland; www.swazi-trails.co.sz) Specialises in day or half-day tours around Swaziland, including white-water rafting, cultural tours and hiking.

Thaba Tours (☎ 033-701 2888; www.thabatours.co.za) 4WD-based tours of Lesotho and the Drakensberg.

Thompsons South Africa (☎ 031-201 3100; www.thompsonssa.com) Midrange and top-end package tours and safaris, including a two-week tour taking in South Africa's main tourist spots.

Wilderness Safaris (www.wilderness-safaris.com) Upscale specialist operator offering high-end luxury safaris and special-interest trips, including bird-watching, botanical and short cycling itineraries; also operates several luxury bush camps.

Wildlife Safaris (☎ 011-791 4238; www.wildlifesaf.co.za) Midrange safaris from Jo'burg and Pretoria to Kruger and Pilanesberg National Parks for individuals and small groups.

TRAIN

South Africa's Shoshololo Meyl passenger trains are run by **Spornet** (☎ 011-773 2944; www.spornet.co.za, click on 'Passengers'), and offer

MINIBUS TAXI ETIQUETTE

Before using minibus taxis, always check out the local situation, and get local advice on the lines and areas where you want to travel. If you do use them, here are some tips on etiquette:

- Passengers with lots of luggage should sit in the first row behind the driver.
- Pay the fare with coins, not notes. Pass the money forward (your fare and those of the people around you) when the taxi is full. Give it to one of the front-seat passengers, not the driver. If you're sitting in the front seat you might have to collect the fares and provide change.
- If you sit on the folding seat by the door it's your job to open and close the door when other people get out. You'll have to get out of the taxi each time.
- Say 'Thank you, driver!' when you want to get out, not 'Stop!'

RIDING THE RAILS

Train travel in South Africa has a place of its own, with an eclectic band of devotees. In addition to the routes mentioned in this section – where the emphasis is on functionality and getting from one place to another – there are numerous special lines.

Blue Train

South Africa's most famous train, the **Blue Train** (☎ 012-334 8459, 021-449 2672; www.bluetrain.co.za) has such a reputation among train aficionados that some people come to South Africa just to ride it. Schedules vary, and are now much curtailed from what they once were, but the train usually runs about once or twice weekly between Pretoria and Cape Town. For 27 hours of luxury, one-way fares (per person sharing) are R9695/10,470 for deluxe/luxury, including all meals and drinks.

In addition to the contacts listed here, some travel agents, both in South Africa and in other countries, also take bookings. It's worth inquiring about special packages, including one-way flights from Pretoria/Jo'burg to Cape Town and a night's accommodation. Also inquire about low-season fares if you are thinking about travelling between January and August, or between mid-November and late December.

Rovos Rail

Rivalling the *Blue Train* as the most luxurious and expensive service in Africa, **Rovos Rail** (☎ 012-315 8242; www.rovos.co.za) has regular trips including Pretoria–Cape Town over two nights/three days (as opposed to the *Blue Train's* one night/two days), with stops at Matjiesfontein and Kimberley; Pretoria–Durban; and Cape Town–George.

Shongololo Express

Not as luxurious as the other classic trains (though it's still quite acceptable) is the **Shongololo Express** (☎ 011-781 4616; www.shongololo.com); you travel by night and then disembark for a day's sightseeing. Among other trips, it offers a 16-day tour taking in South Africa's major sights.

Tulbagh.com

Tulbagh.com (☎ /fax 023-230 1348; http://tulbagh.com/Visitor's%20Information/attractions.htm) organises a range of package trips by train from Cape Town to Tulbagh, the Klein Cederberg Nature Reserve and Matjiesfontein.

Union Ltd Steam Rail Tours

The *Union Limited* was the pre-*Blue Train* king of the line in South Africa, running to Cape Town with passengers who were meeting liners to Europe. The train was luxurious in its time and has been meticulously restored. **Union Ltd Steam Rail Tours** (☎ 021-449 4391; http://home.intekom.com/bluegrass/sites/steamsa) runs several tours, including the six-day 'Golden Thread' from Cape Town along the coast to Oudtshoorn and back again. Passengers have more room than they once did, with two people now sharing a four-berth compartment and singles in a two-berth compartment.

There are also many less-ritzy steam train trips, including the *Apple Express* from Port Elizabeth (p251), the *Outeniqua Choo-Tjoe* between Knysna and George (p216), and the *Banana Express* along the KwaZulu-Natal south coast from Port Shepstone (p324).

regular services connecting major cities on 'name trains' (some of the main routes are listed, opposite). These are a good and safe, albeit slow, way to get around, and more comfortable than taking the bus. The trains are also relatively affordable and, unlike the long-distance buses, fares on short sectors are not inflated.

On overnight journeys, 1st- and 2nd-class fares include a sleeping berth, but there's an additional charge for bedding hire. Alternatively, you can hire a private compartment (which sleeps four in 1st class and six in 2nd class) or a coupe (which sleeps two in 1st class and three in 2nd class) – these are a good way of travelling more securely.

Meals are available in the dining car, or in the comfort of your compartment.

Tickets must be booked at least 24 hours in advance (you can book up to three months in advance). Bookings for anywhere in the country can be done at any individual station, or through the **Shosholoz Meyl Reservations Centre** (☎ 0860-008 888, 011-774 4555). For an overview of what awaits you on the South African rails, check out **The Man in Seat 61** (www.seat61.com/South%20Africa.htm).

Routes

Main routes include the following:

Algoa Jo'burg–Port Elizabeth via Bloemfontein; daily; 20 hours.

Amatola Jo'burg–East London via Bloemfontein; Sunday to Friday; 20 hours.

Bosveld Jo'burg–Musina via Makhado; daily; 17 hours.

Diamond Express Jo'burg–Bloemfontein; three times weekly; nine hours.

Komati Jo'burg–Komatipoort via Pretoria, Middleburg and Nelspruit; daily; 13 hours; connects to the Komatipoort–Maputo train.

Trans Karoo Pretoria/Jo'burg–Cape Town via Kimberly; daily; 28 hours.

Trans Natal Jo'burg–Durban via Ladysmith and Pietermaritzburg; five times weekly; 13½ hours.

Trans Oranje Cape Town–Durban via Kimberly, Bloemfontein and Kroonstad; weekly; 31 hours.

Some 1st-/2nd-/economy-class sample fares are: Jo'burg–Durban R250/165/100; Cape Town–Pretoria R550/350/230; Jo'burg–Port Elizabeth R365/245/145. Return fares are double the one-way fares. It's possible to put a vehicle on board the *Trans Karoo* for an extra R1345.

There are no passenger trains in Lesotho or Swaziland.

Metro Trains

There are metro services in Jo'burg (p420), Cape Town (p159) and Pretoria (p440), though most lines aren't recommended for security reasons. The new **Gautrain** (www.gautrain.co.za) may soon connect Jo'burg and Pretoria.

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Health

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As long as you stay up to date with your vaccinations and take basic preventive measures, you're unlikely to succumb to most of the health hazards covered in this chapter. While South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland have an impressive selection of tropical diseases on offer, it's more likely you'll get a bout of diarrhoea or a cold than a more exotic malady. The main exception to this is malaria, which is a real risk in lower-lying areas of Swaziland, and in eastern South Africa.

BEFORE YOU GO

A little predeparture planning will save you trouble later. Get a check-up from your dentist and from your doctor if you have any regular medication or chronic illness, eg high blood pressure and asthma. You should also organise spare contact lenses and glasses (and take your optical prescription with you); get a first-aid and medical kit together; and arrange necessary vaccinations.

Travellers can register with the **International Association for Medical Advice to Travellers** (IAMAT; www.iamat.org), which provides directories of certified doctors. If you'll be spending much time in more remote areas, such as parts of Lesotho, consider doing a

first-aid course (contact the Red Cross or St John's Ambulance), or attending a remote medicine first-aid course, such as that offered by **Wilderness Medical Training** (WMT; www.wildernessmedicaltraining.co.uk).

If you are bringing medications with you, carry them in their original containers, clearly labelled. A signed and dated letter from your physician describing all medical conditions and medications, including generic names, is also a good idea. If carrying syringes or needles, be sure to have a physician's letter documenting their medical necessity.

INSURANCE

Find out in advance whether your insurance plan will make payments directly to providers, or will reimburse you later for overseas health expenditures. In South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland, most doctors expect payment in cash. It's vital to ensure that your travel insurance will cover any emergency transport required to get you to a hospital in a major city, or all the way home, by air and with a medical attendant if necessary. Not all insurance covers this, so check the contract carefully. If you need medical assistance, your insurance company might be able to help locate the nearest hospital or clinic, or you can ask at your hotel. In an emergency, contact your embassy or consulate.

RECOMMENDED VACCINATIONS

The **World Health Organisation** (WHO; www.who.int/en/) recommends that all travellers be covered for diphtheria, tetanus, measles, mumps, rubella and polio, as well as for hepatitis B, regardless of their destination. The consequences of these diseases can be severe, and outbreaks do occur.

According to the **Centers for Disease Control & Prevention** (www.cdc.gov), the following vaccinations are recommended for South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland: hepatitis A, hepatitis B, rabies and typhoid, and boosters for tetanus, diphtheria and measles. Yellow fever is not a risk in the region, but the certificate is an entry requirement if you're travelling from an infected region (see p648).

MEDICAL CHECKLIST

It's a good idea to carry a medical and first-aid kit with you, to help yourself in the case of minor illness or injury. Following is a list of items to consider packing.

- antibiotics (prescription only), eg ciprofloxacin (Ciproxin) or norfloxacin (Utinor)
- anti-diarrhoeal drugs (eg loperamide)
- acetaminophen (paracetamol) or aspirin
- anti-inflammatory drugs (eg ibuprofen)
- antihistamines (for hay fever and allergic reactions)
- antibacterial ointment (eg Bactroban) for cuts and abrasions (prescription only)
- antimalaria pills, if you'll be in malarial areas
- bandages, gauze
- scissors, safety pins, tweezers, pocket knife
- DEET-containing insect repellent for the skin
- permethrin-containing insect spray for clothing, tents and bed nets
- sun block
- oral rehydration salts
- iodine tablets (for water purification)
- sterile needles, syringes and fluids if travelling to remote areas

INTERNET RESOURCES

There is a wealth of travel health advice on the Internet. The Lonely Planet website at www.lonelyplanet.com is a good place to start. The World Health Organisation (WHO) publishes the helpful *International Travel and Health*, available free at www.who.int/ith/. Other useful websites include **MD Travel Health** (www.mdtravelhealth.com) and **Fit for Travel** (www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk).

Official government travel health websites include:

- Australia** www.smarttraveller.gov.au/tips/travelwell.html
- Canada** www.hc-sc.gc.ca/index_e.html
- UK** www.dh.gov.uk/PolicyAndGuidance/HealthAdviceForTravellers/fs/en
- USA** www.cdc.gov/travel/

FURTHER READING

- *A Comprehensive Guide to Wilderness and Travel Medicine* (1998) Eric A Weiss
- *Healthy Travel* (1999) Jane Wilson-Howarth

- *Healthy Travel Africa* (2000) Isabelle Young
- *How to Stay Healthy Abroad* (2002) Richard Dawood
- *Travel in Health* (1994) Graham Fry
- *Travel with Children* (2004) Cathy Lanigan

IN TRANSIT

DEEP VEIN THROMBOSIS

Prolonged immobility during flights can cause deep vein thrombosis (DVT) – the formation of blood clots in the legs. The longer the flight, the greater the risk. Although most blood clots are reabsorbed uneventfully, some might break off and travel through the blood vessels to the lungs, where they could cause life-threatening complications.

The chief symptom is swelling or pain of the foot, ankle or calf, usually but not always on just one side. When a blood clot travels to the lungs, it may cause chest pain and breathing difficulty. Travellers with any of these symptoms should immediately seek medical attention. To prevent DVT walk about the cabin, perform isometric compressions of the leg muscles (ie contract the leg muscles while sitting), drink plenty of fluids and avoid alcohol.

JET LAG

If you're crossing more than five time zones you could suffer jet lag, resulting in insomnia, fatigue, malaise or nausea. To avoid jet lag try drinking plenty of fluids (non-alcoholic) and eating light meals. Upon arrival, get exposure to natural sunlight and readjust your schedule (for meals, sleep, etc) as soon as possible.

IN SOUTH AFRICA, LESOTHO & SWAZILAND

AVAILABILITY & COST OF HEALTH CARE

Good quality health care is available in all of South Africa's major urban areas, and private hospitals are generally of excellent standard. Public hospitals by contrast are often underfunded and overcrowded, and

in off-the-beaten-track areas, such as the former homelands; and in Lesotho and Swaziland, reliable medical facilities are rare.

Prescriptions are generally required in South Africa. Drugs for chronic diseases should be brought from home. There is a high risk of contracting HIV from infected blood transfusions. The **BloodCare Foundation** (www.bloodcare.org.uk) is a useful source of safe, screened blood, which can be transported to any part of the world within 24 hours.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES

Following are some of the diseases that are found in South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland, though with a few basic preventative measures, it's unlikely that you'll succumb to any of these.

Cholera

Cholera is caused by a bacteria, and spread via contaminated drinking water. In South Africa, the risk to travellers is very low; you're only likely to encounter it in eastern rural areas, where you should avoid tap water and unpeeled or uncooked fruits and vegetables. The main symptom is profuse watery diarrhoea, which causes debilitation if fluids are not replaced quickly. An oral cholera vaccine is available in the USA, but it is not particularly effective. Most cases of cholera can be avoided by close attention to drinking water and by avoiding potentially contaminated food. Treatment is by fluid replacement (orally or via a drip), but sometimes antibiotics are needed. Self-treatment is not advised.

Dengue Fever (Break-bone Fever)

Dengue fever, spread through the bite of mosquitos, causes a feverish illness with headache and muscle pains similar to those experienced with a bad, prolonged attack of influenza. There might be a rash. Mosquito bites should be avoided whenever possible. This disease is present in south-eastern coastal areas of South Africa, and in Lesotho and Swaziland. Self-treatment: paracetamol and rest.

Filariasis

Filariasis is caused by tiny worms migrating in the lymphatic system, and is spread by the bite from an infected mosquito. Sym-

ptoms include localised itching and swelling of the legs and/or genitalia. Treatment is available. Self-treatment: none.

Hepatitis A

Hepatitis A, which occurs in all three countries, is spread through contaminated food (particularly shellfish) and water. It causes jaundice and, although it is rarely fatal, it can cause prolonged lethargy and delayed recovery. If you've had hepatitis A, you shouldn't drink alcohol for up to six months afterwards, but once you've recovered, there won't be any long-term problems. The first symptoms include dark urine and a yellow colour to the whites of the eyes. Sometimes a fever and abdominal pain might be present. Hepatitis A vaccine (Avaxim, VAQTA, Havrix) is given as an injection: a single dose will give protection for up to a year, and a booster after a year gives 10-year protection. Hepatitis A and typhoid vaccines can also be given as a single dose vaccine, hepatyrix or viatim. Self-treatment: none.

Hepatitis B

Hepatitis B, found in all three countries, is spread through infected blood, contaminated needles and sexual intercourse. It can also be spread from an infected mother to the baby during childbirth. It affects the liver, causing jaundice and occasionally liver failure. Most people recover completely, but some people might be chronic carriers of the virus, which could lead eventually to cirrhosis or liver cancer. Those visiting high-risk areas for long periods or those with increased social or occupational risk should be immunised. Many countries now routinely give hepatitis B as part of the childhood vaccination programme. It is given singly or can be given at the same time as hepatitis A (hepatyrix).

A course will give protection for at least five years. It can be given over four weeks or six months. Self-treatment: none.

HIV

HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, is an enormous problem in South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland, with a devastating impact on local health systems and community structures. KwaZulu-Natal has one of the highest rates of infection on the continent, with

an HIV-positive incidence of close to 40% according to some surveys, and South Africa has more people living with HIV than any country in the world. The statistics are similarly sobering for Lesotho and Swaziland: Swaziland has the world's highest HIV prevalence, with Lesotho close behind. The virus is spread through infected blood and blood products, by sexual intercourse with an infected partner, and from an infected mother to her baby during childbirth and breastfeeding. It can be spread through 'blood to blood' contacts, such as with contaminated instruments during medical, dental, acupuncture and other body-piercing procedures, and through sharing used intravenous needles. At present there is no cure; medication that might keep the disease under control is available, but these drugs are too expensive, or unavailable, for the overwhelming majority of South Africans. If you think you might have been infected with HIV, a blood test is necessary; a three-month gap after exposure and before testing is required to allow antibodies to appear in the blood. Self-treatment: none.

Malaria

Malaria is mainly confined to the eastern half of South Africa (northern KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga, Limpopo) and to Swaziland, although parts of North-West Province can also be malarial. Apart from road accidents, it's probably the only major health risk that you face travelling in this area, and precautions should be taken. The disease is caused by a parasite in the bloodstream spread via the bite of the female *Anopheles* mosquito. There are several types of malaria; falciparum malaria is the most dangerous type and the predominant form in South Africa. Infection rates vary with season and climate, so check out the situation before departure. Several different drugs are used to prevent malaria, and new ones are in the pipeline. Up-to-date advice from a travel health clinic is essential as some medication is more suitable for some travellers than others (eg people with epilepsy should avoid mefloquine, and doxycycline should not be taken by pregnant women or children aged under 12).

The early stages of malaria include headaches, fevers, generalised aches and pains, and malaise, which could be mistaken for

flu. Other symptoms can include abdominal pain, diarrhoea and a cough. Anyone who develops a fever in a malarial area should assume malarial infection until a blood test proves negative, even if you have been taking antimalarial medication. If not treated, the next stage could develop within 24 hours, particularly if falciparum malaria is the parasite: jaundice, then reduced consciousness and coma (also known as cerebral malaria) followed by death. Treatment in hospital is essential, and the death rate might still be as high as 10% even in the best intensive-care facilities.

Many travellers think that malaria is a mild illness, and that taking antimalarial drugs causes more illness through side effects than actually getting malaria. This is unfortunately not true. If you decide against antimalarial drugs, you must understand the risks, and be obsessive about avoiding mosquito bites. Use nets and insect repellent, and report any fever or flulike symptoms to a doctor as soon as possible. Some people advocate homeopathic preparations against malaria, such as Demal200, but as yet there is no conclusive evidence that this is effective, and many homeopaths do not recommend their use.

Malaria in pregnancy frequently results in miscarriage or premature labour, and the risks to both mother and foetus during pregnancy are considerable. Travel throughout the region when pregnant should be carefully considered. Adults who have survived childhood malaria have developed immunity and usually only develop mild cases of malaria; most Western travellers have no immunity at all. Immunity wanes after 18 months of nonexposure, so even if you have had malaria in the past and used to live in a malaria-prone area, you might no longer be immune.

Rabies

Rabies is spread by receiving bites or licks from an infected animal on broken skin. Few human cases are reported in South Africa, with the risks highest in rural areas. It is always fatal once the clinical symptoms start (which might be up to several months after an infected bite), so post-bite vaccination should be given as soon as possible. Postbite vaccination (whether or not you've been vaccinated before the

bite) prevents the virus from spreading to the central nervous system. Animal handlers should be vaccinated, as should those travelling to remote areas where a reliable source of postbite vaccine is not available within 24 hours. Three preventive injections are needed over a month. If you have not been vaccinated you'll need a course of five injections starting 24 hours or as soon as possible after the injury. If you have been vaccinated, you'll need fewer postbite injections, and have more time to seek medical help. Self-treatment: none.

Schistosomiasis (Bilharzia)

This disease is a risk in eastern parts of South Africa, and in Swaziland. (Lesotho, happily, is considered schistosomiasis-free.) It's spread by flukes (minute worms) that are carried by a species of freshwater snail, which then sheds them into slow-moving or still water. The parasites penetrate human skin during swimming and then migrate to the bladder or bowel. They are excreted via stool or urine and could contaminate fresh water, where the cycle starts again. Swimming in suspect freshwater lakes or slow-running rivers should be avoided. Symptoms range from none, to transient fever and rash, and advanced cases might have blood in the stool or in the urine. A blood test can detect antibodies if you might have been exposed, and treatment is readily available. If not treated, the infection can cause kidney failure or permanent bowel damage. It is not possible for you to infect others. Self-treatment: none.

Tuberculosis

Tuberculosis (TB) is spread through close respiratory contact and occasionally through infected milk or milk products. BCG vaccination is recommended if you'll be mixing closely with the local population, especially on long-term stays, although it gives only moderate protection against the disease. TB can be asymptomatic, only being picked up on a routine chest X-ray. Alternatively, it can cause a cough, weight loss or fever, sometimes months or even years after exposure. Self-treatment: none.

Typhoid

This is spread through food or water contaminated by infected human faeces. The first symptom is usually a fever or a pink rash on the abdomen. Sometimes septicaemia (blood poisoning) can occur. A typhoid vaccine (typhim Vi, typherix) will give protection for three years. In some countries, the oral vaccine Vivotif is also available. Antibiotics are usually given as treatment, and death is rare unless septicaemia occurs. Self-treatment: none.

Yellow Fever

Although not a problem within South Africa, Lesotho or Swaziland, you'll need to carry a certificate of vaccination if you'll be arriving in South Africa from an infected country. Infected countries include most of South Africa's neighbours; for a full list see the websites of **WHO** (www.who.int/wer/) or the **Centers for Disease Control & Prevention** (www.cdc.gov/travel/blusheet.htm).

ANTIMALARIAL A TO D

- **A** – Awareness of the risk. No medication is totally effective, but protection of up to 95% is achievable with most drugs, as long as other measures have been taken.
- **B** – Bites, to be avoided at all costs. Sleep in a screened room, use a mosquito spray or coils, sleep under a permethrin-impregnated net at night. Cover up at night with long trousers and long sleeves, preferably with permethrin-treated clothing. Apply appropriate repellent to all areas of exposed skin in the evenings.
- **C** – Chemical prevention (ie antimalarial drugs) is usually needed in malarial areas. Expert advice is needed as resistance patterns can change, and new drugs are in development. Not all antimalarial drugs are suitable for everyone. Most antimalarial drugs need to be started at least a week before and continued for four weeks after the last possible exposure to malaria.
- **D** – Diagnosis. If you have a fever or flulike illness within a year of travel to a malarial area, malaria is a possibility, and immediate medical attention is necessary.

TRAVELLERS' DIARRHOEA

While less likely in South Africa than elsewhere on the continent, this is a common travel-related illness, sometimes simply due to dietary changes. It is possible that you will succumb, especially if you are spending a lot of time in rural areas or eating at inexpensive local food stalls. To avoid diarrhoea, only eat fresh fruits or vegetables that have been cooked or peeled, and be wary of dairy products that might contain unpasteurised milk. Although freshly cooked food can often be a safe option, plates or serving utensils might be dirty, so be selective when eating food from street vendors (make sure that cooked food is piping hot all the way through).

If you develop diarrhoea, be sure to drink plenty of fluids, preferably an oral rehydration solution containing lots of water and some salt and sugar. A few loose stools don't require treatment but, if you start having more than four or five stools a day, you should start taking an antibiotic (usually a quinoline drug, such as ciprofloxacin or norfloxacin) and an anti-diarrhoeal agent (such as loperamide) if you're not within easy reach of a toilet. If diarrhoea is bloody, persists for more than 72 hours or is accompanied by fever, shaking chills or severe abdominal pain, you should seek medical attention.

Amoebic Dysentery

Contracted by eating contaminated food and water, amoebic dysentery causes blood and mucus in the faeces. It can be relatively mild and tends to come on gradually, but seek medical advice if you think you have the illness as it won't clear up without treatment (which is with specific antibiotics).

Giardiasis

This, like amoebic dysentery, is also caused by ingesting contaminated food or water. The illness usually appears a week or more after you have been exposed to the offending parasite. Giardiasis might cause only a short-lived bout of typical travellers' diarrhoea, but it can also cause persistent diarrhoea. Ideally, seek medical advice if you suspect you have giardiasis, but if you are in a remote area you could start a course of antibiotics.

ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

Heat Exhaustion

This condition occurs following heavy sweating and excessive fluid loss with inadequate replacement of fluids and salt, and is primarily a risk in hot climates when taking unaccustomed exercise before full acclimatisation. Symptoms include headache, dizziness and tiredness. Dehydration is already happening by the time you feel thirsty – aim to drink sufficient water to produce pale, diluted urine. Self-treatment: fluid replacement with water and/or fruit juice, and cooling by cold water and fans. The treatment of the salt-loss component consists of consuming salty fluids as in soup, and adding a little more table salt to foods than usual.

Heatstroke

Heat exhaustion is a precursor to the much more serious condition of heatstroke. In this case there is damage to the sweating mechanism, with an excessive rise in body temperature, irrational and hyperactive behaviour, and eventually loss of consciousness and death. Rapid cooling by spraying the body with water and fanning is ideal. Emergency fluid and electrolyte replacement is usually also required by intravenous drip.

Insect Bites & Stings

Mosquitoes might not always carry malaria or dengue fever, but they (and other insects) can cause irritation and infected bites. To avoid these, take the same precautions as you would for avoiding malaria (see p647). Bee and wasp stings cause real problems only to those who have a severe allergy to the stings (anaphylaxis), in which case, carry an adrenaline (epinephrine) injection.

Scorpions are found in arid areas. They can cause a painful bite that is sometimes life-threatening. If bitten by a scorpion, take a painkiller. Medical treatment should be sought if collapse occurs.

Ticks are always a risk away from urban areas. If you get bitten, press down around the tick's head with tweezers, grab the head and gently pull upwards. Avoid pulling the rear of the body as this may squeeze the tick's gut contents through the attached mouth parts into the skin, increasing the

risk of infection and disease. Smearing chemicals on the tick will not make it let go and is not recommended.

Snake Bites

Basically, avoid getting bitten! Don't walk barefoot, or stick your hand into holes or cracks. However, 50% of those bitten by venomous snakes are not actually injected with poison (envenomed). If bitten by a snake, do not panic. Immobilise the bitten limb with a splint (such as a stick) and apply a bandage over the site with firm pressure, similar to bandaging a sprain. Do not apply a tourniquet, or cut or suck the bite. Get medical help as soon as possible.

Water

High-quality water is widely available in South Africa and drinking from taps is fine, except in rural areas. In Lesotho and Swaziland, stick to bottled water, and purify stream water before drinking it.

TRADITIONAL MEDICINE

According to some estimates, as many as 85% of residents of South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland rely in part, or wholly, on

traditional medicine. It's believed that there are more than 200,000 traditional healers in South Africa alone (in comparison with some 20,000 Western medical practitioners). Given the comparatively high costs, and the unavailability of Western medicine in many rural areas, these traditional healers are the first contact for much of the population when they fall ill. The *sangoma* (traditional healer) and *inyanga* (herbalist) hold revered positions in many communities, and traditional medicinal products are widely available in local markets. On the darker side of things, *muti* killings (in which human body parts are sought for traditional medicinal purposes) are also common – reported approximately monthly – as are abuses in which false claims are made for cures, or in which diseases spread by unsanitary practices.

While there is still no national legislation regulating traditional medicinal practitioners, there are several umbrella groups, including the Traditional Healers' Association of South Africa, and the African Herbal Medicine Association. These aim to raise awareness and curb abuses in the practice of traditional medicine, but there is a long way to go.